

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS IN JERUSALEM

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Two words, one the name of a man, the other the name of a place, lock together the mystery, ministry and majesty of divine intervention in the affairs of needy humanity. When JESUS entered JERUSALEM the amazing event that took place has changed the world. Certainly my life has been transformed by the Man called JESUS in the place called JERUSALEM.

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Scriptures contained in this book are from various translations.

The SETTING of the Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem

One can scan the pages of written history from top to bottom, and in all accounts of the centuries and not find any generation in which Christ could better have come than just the generation in which He did come.

For a careful study of the time and period leaves an indelible conviction and impression on the heart and mind: that Jesus Christ was strictly of His time, and that the New Testament is, in its narratives, language, and allusions, strictly true to the period and circumstances in which all its events are set. However in another and far more important aspect there is no similarity between Jesus Christ and His period. "Never man" - of that, or any subsequent period of time "spoke like this man;" never man lived or died as He lived and died. Without doubt, if He was the Son of David, He also is the Son of God, Messiah of Israel, and the Saviour of the world.

Some years ago whilst standing in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem one little spot was pointed out to fellow travellers and myself that we were looking at the centre of the world. "X" marked the spot as it were! It was and is a rather strange and fantastic claim. Yet there is a real sense in which this tiny parcel of land on the earth's surface called Israel is the geographical centre. Take the three great continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa; in between them and linking them up, lies this little land bridge on the

eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Clearly, if you were to start a movement whose aim was extend out into the three great continents simultaneously, that strip of land would be the natural place to use as a starting point. The old legend about the centre of the world is, therefore, truer than the men who invented it realized. It is no haphazard or unrelated chance that made Bethlehem and Nazareth and Calvary just outside the boundary walls of Jerusalem the cradle of the Christian faith. It was the most brilliant setting for the launching of a world religion. The place was right in every detail, the setting designated by the God of history.

It was when the fullness of time was come, says Paul, that God sent forth His Son (Galatians 4:4) The timing of this intrusion in history was so accurate, all factors were in true focus, the time was right for the man at God's right hand to enter into the converging levels and stratas of humanity. I intend to look at this event when the hour and the Man met.

(1) THE WAITING WORLD WITNESSED the Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem

World conditions were ripe to receive God's supreme revelation. It was the fullness of time, said Paul - supremely so when upon the whole Greco-Roman world there burst suddenly out in Galilee the phenomenal movement in the heavens of a slowly moving star, angels and men were locked in unfolding prophetic announcements. The sound of a new name was on the lips of men and women and heavenly messenger's, the name of Jesus. His wondrous divinity is announced in His birth through the Holy Spirit, in His personality as Saviour (Jesus), and in His absolute Godhead as revealed in the name Emmanuel - God with us.

The Gospel of Matthew was written especially for Jewish people, though not exclusively for Jewish people. It sets forth the Law, and refers constantly to the Old Testament Covenant Scriptures, showing how both have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Matthew alone recounts the visit of the mysterious Magi. The whole waiting world at this time was expecting the advent of some Great One. "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" Their adoration foreshadowed His universal domination. Again it is Matthew who tells us how Herod, the usurper of David's sovereignty, sought to murder the heir. As it was, the wooden cradle that held the Child, would, in a few years be exchanged for a wooden cross. Trees were held in high value in the land of Promise, the people were instructed by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to care for the forests and tree plantations. Care for the trees would safeguard and maintain the soil and prevent erosion of the land. Later a highly skilled Jewish carpenter would make by hand yokes of perfect fit, easy to use by those working the land. I note with interest the use of wood as the material designated in the furniture on the stage of Redemption.

(2) POLITICAL POWERS PROPELLED the Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem

A clear and dominating feature of the political situation to the generation of people to which Jesus came, was the unification of the world. The Roman eagle perched on every frontier post, and looked out from every boundary. It was the emblem of the mighty

Caesar's success and achievement. The might of Roman domination, ensured the days of closed frontiers was long gone. The era of separate, self-sufficient, antagonistic nations glaring at one another across stacks of bristling weapons and piled up defences, was over. All the thousands of miles of routes and roads from the Atlantic Ocean to the Caspian Sea, from Britain's Isle to the River Nile, from the heavy stone ribbon of Hadrian's Wall to the sparkling waters of the River Euphrates, the blood splattered Roman standards could be seen. Everywhere the barriers were down, and remained down. The chaos had been crushed then re-organised and consolidated into a single community. The world had enforced peace, sang from the same hymn sheet, and was one big neighbourhood. Three factors contributed to this situation into which the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ was born. First factor was the Roman peace. Had Jesus come a hundred years earlier, his gospel would have been blocked (humanly speaking) at every turn and sign-post on the land by national frontiers, blocked on sea and ocean by cut throat pirates who made the high seas impassable. Had he come in later times, he would have found civilization battling with the barbarian hordes from the North, so preoccupied with the fighting to have time or inclination for the gospel. However Jesus came to a generation when Roman peace held the world in an iron grip, and men could hear the Bethlehem angels sing.

The second well-known factor was Roman road network. Roman engineering set in stone. Amazing road systems, many thousand tons of hardcore, local stone. Those who worked on them, enforced labourers, sweating, cursing, dying, little realized they were in a sense preparing a way for the Son of God. But they were. At times God's purposes are worked out in stone and sweat and in the open air. Preacher's could not have evangelised so effectively from Jerusalem, Samaria to the furthest parts of the earth. Redemption rushed down Roman roads.

The third important factor making for the unity of the world when Jesus came was the vital one of Common language. For while each province spoke its own tongue or dialect, everywhere the people were bilingual and were able to speak in the Greek language to a greater or lesser degree. At all points of the compass from the heights of Galatia as much as on the busy streets of Athens, in the sunshine of Spain as in Rome, preachers with a mission and a gospel message could speak Greek knowing they would be listened to and fully understood. The Roman peace, the road network, the common language, had shrunk the world and linked the people together, the way had been prepared on these three levels to receive the message of Jesus Christ.

(3) ECONOMIC EMERGENCIES ENABLED the Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem

It was also economically as well politically the right time in history when Jesus came. Externally and superficially all appeared well at the time. Culture, luxury, and magnificence but all was not well, for below the surface, was an economic time bomb. Fuses were smouldering in the hearts of thousands of people right across the Greco-Roman world. Israel under Roman rule was in an economic mess. The appearance of luxury was a lie, and the so-called magnificence of the day pressurized the misery and frustration in the hearts of many. It was called the Golden Age, by writers, but in fact it was a ghastly and appalling age. Poverty clothed the people with thin rags, and a seething

bitterness against the falseness to be found in every level of society, military, religious, civil all the institutions. The time was ripe for a drastic and dramatic change, time for the long promised One of the Hebrew Scriptures to reveal Himself and usher in new hope and fairness. It was time for the Holy one of Israel to again come to the rescue and redemption of His people and all the people in the World. People had had enough of living in darkened cellars, and longed as it were to sit in the bright sunshine on the flat-topped roofs of their homes, with a few shekels in their purse, and enough to put wine and barley bread on the table.

In fact in Jerusalem and reaching to every quarter of Caesar's dominions the economic situation had worsened to crisis levels when Jesus came. Israel felt the disastrous aftermath of war, the wild, colossal extravagance of Herod the Great, the crushing burden of taxation, the growing overpopulation which made it almost impossible for the land to provide food enough for its inhabitants. Stress and depression effected the great mass of the people, care-ridden and full of worry. It was an hour of dark despair and economic need, and the fullness of time for Jesus to minister in Jerusalem.

(4) MORAL MIRE MOTIVATED the Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem.

It has been said, and believed by many people of an earlier age, and through the years to the present time, that after Jesus came the world lost its light heartedness and natural laughter and good spirits. The golden light changed to mid-grey, mud in place of pure colour; until then the Greco-Roman world was perfectly happy, innocent and pleasurably contented in its nature worship of Zeus, and Dionysus and Aphrodite. Then Jesus came and really spoiled everything! That statement was and is an ongoing lie, false to the facts. Historically it is nonsense. The very idea that the ancient world was happy and innocent and a laugh every minute is a miserable myth.

Paul in his Letter to the Romans, in the opening chapter, pens and paints a true picture, that stands for ever for all future ages to look at study and read, of a world sunk in a mire of moral hopelessness. Writing in (Romans 1:24 - 32) of the natural man the picture could not have been more sombre. Lost in sin. Blind to God. Living in darkness, poisoned by his own fallen nature. The dark list of human behaviour when sin rules and God is rejected makes grim and depressing reading, similar behaviour today is seen in every popular newspaper, reflected by many dramas and plays on television. We are reminded daily, that human nature does not change, so the problem is an ongoing one, and rather frightening one in the sense that God's wrath is clearly seen, in actuality He allows sinful man to do exactly as they please, sin of every kind and intensity, perversion, violence and murder, the judgement of God already rests on this free-wheeling behaviour. Sin is powerful, but, as then, so it is today, the power of God to save and deliver, is still at work in our time and generation today.

The letter writer to the Church at Rome says, "I am bound both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For

in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith". (Romans 1; 14 - 17.)

What goes round, comes round, in the moral life of man and nations, weakened by the continued experiment of slackening morality, and constant tampering with long established codes of honour of decent behaviour, there comes a time of reaction. Enough is enough. Inevitably that something of God which exists beneath the surface of men's hearts, stands up and records meaningful protest. The glamour of sensationalist creed and teaching, the seduction and lure of the modern gospel of uncontrolled - that anything goes, have the Living Lord Jesus Christ to reckon with, sooner or later. Men will not be satisfied with choking ethics of dust nor want to hear gutter-gospel from arrogant godless preachers for over long. The mire of morality will always motivate the ministry of preachers and ministers who really love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that He alone can lift any and every life from "guttermost to the uttermost".

(5) RELIGIOUS REQUIREMENTS RESOLVED - Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem

When Jesus first came, it was a time of religious ferment. One could buy a god that appealed from a craftsman at his market stall. No doubt on a sale day it was possible to get two gods for the price of one god. They could be purchased, made from stone or marble, metal, silver was popular, carved or polished wood would only need a quick dusting down from time to time. It was the in-thing to collect a few gods, one paid the money and made the choice, then carried the god home in a parcel, to think of a satisfactory place to stand it and of course it would need a name worthy of its important status! There were so many gods stood around that many of them were nameless as well as useless.

It was into such a situation that Jesus came and the religious state of affairs existing at the time, that gave the Redeemer resolve to minister in Jerusalem, He alone had the answer to a great human need. The final answer was in His hands. His hour would come. The wooden transom cross was ready.

The old gods of Rome were either dead or dying. To fill the god gap two expedients were tried. One idea was to import a whole new batch of gods from the East, outlandish colourful oriental deities, were brought in, to create fresh interest and stir Rome's jaded and sad senses. The Olympus where the gods were supposed to live, and dwell, was filled with ordinary people and academic philosophers with smiles on their faces, for the place and the multiplicity of the assorted gods, stood about, still, and silent. It was rather silly and the whole situation became a standing joke. The people stood and smiled at the assembled gods, and the gods stared right back at them. What a way to spend a day out at the Olympus or the Pantheon.

The second idea was as futile as the import idea. It was the strange phenomenon of according to Caesar divine honours. The Emperor was promoted to rank of deity. In this act of elevation the Roman Empire reached the bottom pit of shame, stupidity and degradation. The way up, was in fact the way down and out as far as the Roman Empire

was concerned. Today thousands of dogs are named Caesar, from god to dog says it all! All the man-made gods, all the self appointed gods, all the expedients failed. What was a whole Pantheon of man-made gods worth if they had nothing to say to a man or woman with a broken heart. What could the divinity of Caesar say to a soul stabbed with the remorse of sin? When everything had been done that could be done, the hungry hearts of man and woman were hungry still.

In all the swirling mists of mystery in these matters, there was something taking place, it was definite and real it was spiritual. There was a strange something impending from the side of God. He was making His Presence felt in a very gentle way. He was causing men in many places throughout the empire, men of deeper nature, and with a more spiritual vision to look into the darkness of the day, for some glimmer of golden light, for some faint flush of dawn.

For the waiting Jewish people throughout the empire, the Hope of the Messiah of Israel was blazing more clearly and brightly than it had done for centuries. The great mass of Jewish literature written in the inter-testament period between the Old Testament and the New Testament is full of this great hope. Promise and prophecy flitted like the rays of the sun in Jewish hearts and minds. Hebrew Scripture was becoming relevant and meaningful again. The Jewish people, penetrating as they did every corner of the empire, took that great dream with them and handed it on to their children, family and friends. The Hope was so precious to them, and certainly prepared the way for the Jesus in a wonderful way. The One Supreme God was at work in the hearts of the sons of men, the Hebrew Scriptures was delivering precious treasure to the poor in heart. The Word was to be made flesh and come and live among the sons of men, He would visit village, town and city. He would walk in the valley and stand on the mountain. He would sail on the water and eat on the shore, at all times and in every place He would speak words of understanding, love, mercy, forgiveness and hope. He would be awesome in His ministry, a ministry which would lead Him eventually to Jerusalem.

The STRUCTURE of the Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem

Having briefly written about the SETTING of His ministry, I wish to write on the composition and structure of the Lord's ministry, hopefully in an approach that will show some interpretation and analysis of Jesus' ministry in a number of His visits up to Jerusalem at various crucial times throughout His earthly ministry.

First Visit to Jerusalem ... Insight to Future Ministry.

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male child is to be consecrated to the Lord") and to offer sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "A pair of doves or two young pigeons" (Luke 2:22-24)

This act is in line and accord with the Old Testament Mosaic regulations as displayed in (Leviticus 12:1-4) The Lord said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites: A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go up to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over".

The fortieth day having arrived, Joseph and Mary go up to Jerusalem from Bethlehem. From any place or location in Israel one always goes up to Jerusalem, always up to the Temple in Jerusalem. We are now very much aware of two important facts here, not only the mother's purification but also the child's presentation.

The purification ended with a Sacrifice (Luke 2:24). The presentation of Jesus mentioned in verse 22 and 25f. refer to and included Redemption, the payment of a ransom fee.

On the fortieth day The Redeemer was Himself Redeemed! Not in the sense that Jesus was going to redeem His people and indeed all people of course, for He is, and ever will remain sinless.

The bedrock underlying truth of the Redemption is this: in the night of Israel's deliverance from Egypt "the house of bondage" all the firstborn Egyptian's were slain (Exodus 12: 29). Also in God's sight all the Israelites had forfeited their lives too.

However in place of death God was willing to accept from the tribe of Levi lifelong service in the Tabernacle, later in the Temple, and from all the tribes five shekels for the firstborn as a symbolic offering.

Jesus too was under the sentence of death, He was born "under the Law" (Galatians 4:4), and this in the sense not only of being under personal obligation to keep the Law but also of being duty-bound - with a duty to which He had voluntarily obligated Himself - vicariously (suffered, undergone, or done as the substitute for another, taking the place of another) to bear the Law's demands and penalty and satisfy its rigid demand of perfect obedience.

Jesus had no personal guilt, but had of His own free will taken upon Himself the sin of the world (Isaiah 53:4-6). "Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken of God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all". A key reference in the New Testament is (John 1:29), "The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ". It would appear the redemption fee paid at this time was a symbol of the infinitely greater ransom to which Jesus would later refer to, in saying, "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28 see also Mark 10:45).

It was in connection with the payment of the redemption fee that Joseph and Mary publicly consecrated their forty day old child to God, as Samuel had once being similarly dedicated, recorded in the earlier writings (1 Samuel. 11, 28).

On this first visit of Jesus as a baby to the Temple in Jerusalem Joseph and Mary brought the purification sacrifice. According to (Leviticus 12:6f.) "A lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering". We note here that the same Law states, "If she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for sin offering" (Leviticus 12:8).

It was this poor person's offering that was brought in this case.

The reason for this choice, was not that Joseph and Mary were desperately poor. We know after all that Joseph was a highly skilled craftsman, a carpenter. He must have had sufficient money to pay the redemption fee for Jesus. Also the circumstances surrounding this very special little family, show on the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem, he must have been solvent enough to pay lodging fees and cover incidental expenses. Besides, for forty days the family had been living in or near Bethlehem. Whether during this time Joseph found work and earned wages we do not know, though Jewish craftsmen were known to be hard working and thrifty. One fact however is crystal clear: the means, the money, at Joseph's disposal were insufficient to purchase the more expensive offering of the lamb plus the bird.

Turtledoves are migratory birds flying in flocks over the Land of Israel, (Jesus at a later date, told His hearers to consider the birds of the air). and so can only be obtained from spring through till autumn, but there was always plenty of pigeons available all year round. One could buy two young pigeons or turtledoves for much less than a tenth of the amount demanded to purchase a lamb plus a bird.

So we see real people in a very real world, caring for their young child Jesus, dealing with immense issues of heart and mind, going up to Jerusalem, counting the loose change, at this time where prophecy and pigeons meet and merge in the unfolding Will of God. Simple and yet sublime.

Second Visit to Jerusalem (12 years of age)

Days slip into months, and months into years, the mystery we call time moves on relentlessly. The forty-day-old baby boy, soon became an upwardly growing twelve-year-old boy. So through the coming of a little child the Divine Work of mending a broken world was begun. (Luke 2:40 ff.) "And the child grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the Grace of God was upon Him. Every year His parents went up to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. After the Feast was over, while His parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking He was in their company, they travelled on for a day. then they began looking for Him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find Him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for Him. After three days they found Him in the Temple Courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Every one who heard Him was amazed at His understanding and His answers.

When His parents saw Him, they were astonished. His mother said to Him, " Son why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you". "Why are you searching for Me?" He asked "Didn't you know I had to in My Father's

House?" But they did not understand what He was saying to them. Then He went down to Jerusalem with them and was obedient to them. But His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

This incident is so important to our understanding of the early years in which Jesus was preparing for His future ministry. It shines like a bright star in the darkness of the unrecorded years. The impenetrable veil is parted, giving us access to that which is an almost unfathomable mystery of His self-awareness and self-revelation of this wonderful young Jewish boy.

We are aware of the influence exerted upon His early education by Joseph and Mary, especially by His mother, this is implied throughout the Gospel writings. Of course, His, was a loving pious Jewish home; and at Nazareth there was a synagogue, with possibly a school attached. In that little synagogue Moses and all the Prophets would be read and taught. Discourses and sermons and addresses would be delivered on a regular basis. At a later date Jesus Himself would stand up to read, (Luke 4 : 15ff.) He went to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, as was His custom. And He stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Unrolling it, He found the place where it is written:

The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and the recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Then He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Him, and He began by saying to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

All spoke well of Him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from His lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

The mind of Jesus was thoroughly saturated with the Sacred Scriptures - He was so familiar with them in their every detail. It is thought by some scholars that the home at Nazareth possessed a precious copy of its own of the entire Sacred Volume, which from earliest childhood would feed and strengthen the understanding of the Saviour. An Interesting thought

This familiarity from earliest childhood with the Scriptures in the original Hebrew also explains how at the age of twelve Jesus could be found "in the Temple; sitting in the midst of the doctors and teachers, both hearing them and asking questions". It is generally thought that on this occasion referred to, Jesus had gone up to the Temple in Jerusalem as being "of age" in the Jewish sense of the expression, or, to use their own terms as a "Bar Mitzvah," or "Son of the Commandment," by which obligations and privileges were conferred on the youth, and he became a full member of the congregation.

I have listened to preachers at various times and in various Churches and Chapels preach this, as a fact, in the life of Jesus. However I believe a little caution and research may be helpful in this area of ministry. Having attended a number of "Bar Mitzvah' s" in the

Street Lane Synagogue in my local area in the City of Leeds, as an invited guest, one is aware that the legal age for this meaningful service was not twelve, but thirteen (Ab. V. 21). On the other hand, the Rabbinical Law encouraged (Yoma, 82 a) that even before the legal age was reached lads should be brought up to the Temple, two years, or at least one year before, to witness and share in the events of the festive rites. It was a common sense thing to do for the boys.

It is with certainty and in conformity to this Biblical custom that Jesus went on the occasion named to the Temple. Again we also know that it was the practise of the members of the Sanhedrin - who on ordinary days sat as judicatories, from the close of the morning sacrifice to the time of the evening sacrifice - to come out on the Sabbath and feast -days on to the "the Terrace of the Temple," and there mix and mingle with the people in Jerusalem.

It was a general public event, lots of talking, teaching, exposition of Scripture, great liberty and freedom. People would be asking questions, discussing, objecting at times to statements made. All taking an intelligent part in these open debates. These open lectures took place during the "Moed Katon," or the Minor feast days between the second and last day of the Passover week.

Jesus took a very active part throughout, meanwhile Joseph and Mary, had, as allowed by Law, returned home towards Nazareth on the third day of the Passover Week, whilst the twelve year old Jesus had remained behind.

So these circumstances and customs also explain why His appearance in the midst of the doctors and teachers, although very remarkable considering His young age, did not command attention or concern.

In fact, the only qualification required to be part of the proceedings on the Temple terraces was a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures in the Hebrew language, and a proper understanding of these Scriptures. Jesus was outstanding on both counts. We see this time and time again in His life-giving ministry. He would often say to the people, "Have you not read?" (Matthew 12:3) "-- Haven't you read what David did--" (Matthew 12:5) "Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the Temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? I tell you that One greater than the Temple is here." (Matthew 19:4) "Haven't you read," He replied, "that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female..." (Matthew 21:13), "'It is written He said to them, 'My House will be called a House of Prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers'. (Matthew 22:29f.) Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the Power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in Heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead - Have you not read what God said to you, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

Jesus was twelve years of age, with an immense understanding and insight of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus handled these Scriptures with ease, clarity and compassion. The Word of God was indeed the flashing sword of the Saviour, He was to use its inherent power on every occasion throughout His life-giving ministry. He would confront men and woman from every civilian, military and religious rank, He would deal decisively with devil and

demon in the proclamation of the Gospel. His Word of Power was built and based on the entire writings of the Sacred Scriptures as a complete whole. Preaching and teaching the Word from Genesis to Malachi. Scripture to Jesus was a full and complete whole, not a collection of disconnected jigsaw pieces. He will remain forever the supreme example to all who minister the Gospel in truth.

Jesus believed in the Supremacy of all Scripture and the Primacy of Preaching.

That was His way. It should be our way too.

The young Jewish boy returned home to Nazareth, in perfect obedience to Joseph and Mary, and in perfect obedience to His Father in Heaven, so was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene". (Matthew 2:23)

We move on with the years, and we arrive at a moment when Heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him (Matthew 3:16). And a voice from Heaven said, "This is My Son, whom I love, with Him I am well pleased." Immediately after this declaration and manifestation of the Deity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In characteristic style (Mark 1:12-13) writes, "At once the Spirit sent Jesus out into the desert for forty days, being tempted by Satan. Graphically he adds, "He was with the wild animals and angels attended Him". In Jesus day there were many more species of wild animal in Israel, including lions, than today. Only Mark reports their presence in this connection, he emphasises that God kept Jesus safe in the desert. Angels attended Him, as they had attended the Children of Israel during their forty years in the desert. (Exodus 23:20, 23; 32:34.) The desert experience of Jesus is recorded in much greater detail in Matthew 4:1-11, and Luke 4:1-13. the next visit of Jesus to Jerusalem is in connection with these accounts.

The Third Visit of Jesus to Jerusalem ... Triumph over Satanic Temptations.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. The tempter came to Him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth ."

Then the devil took Him to the Holy City and had Him stand on the highest point of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw your self down. For it is written: " He will command His angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone". Jesus answered him, "It is also written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "All this will I give you" he said, "if you bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from Me Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him." Then the devil left Him, and the angels and attended Him. (Matthew 4:1-11).

Here in the desert wilderness we are standing on Holy ground, and listening to the very words of Jesus Himself. For the duration of those forty days and nights Jesus was utterly alone, with not another soul near Him, not a disciple or a friend or anyone to see what happened and to tell the event afterward.

Yet the Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, and Luke are able between them to give a vivid

and detailed account. There is only one explanation to what happened out there in the desert, far from the beaten track and the eyes and ears of men: the facts came direct from the lips of Jesus Himself.

Divine Self-revelation of a titanic struggle in the wild and desolate loneliness, of the rocks and crags. With the fierce sun beating down by day and the cutting night wind moaning in the night hours. Dangerous prowling beasts, starving hunger, demon voices whispering to His heart and mind, the grace of God and the angels brought Him through the ordeal.

Jesus told His disciples of His temptation and testing, because He was compelled to tell them. He had to share with them in this great matter. The titanic struggle He had been through could not be totally silenced. Indeed the whole Gospel and our personal hopes are bound up with a Saviour "who was in all points tempted" - not just here and there, but in all points - "like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). It will be helpful at this point to refresh our mind with the tremendous truth recorded in Matthew 3:16-17 ... "As soon as Jesus was baptised, He went up out of the water. At that moment Heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. And a voice from Heaven said, "This is My Son," with Him I am well pleased."

Events surrounding Jesus' baptism reveal the intense religious excitement and social ferment of the early days of John the Baptist's ministry. Herod had been rapacious and extravagant; Roman military occupation was harsh. Some agitation centred around the charge of procurators from Gratus to Pilate in A.D. 26. Most of the people hoped for a religious solution to their problems and their low political fortunes, and when they heard of a new prophet, they flocked out into the desert to hear him. The religious sect (Essenes) from Qumran professed similar doctrines of repentance and baptism. Jesus was baptised at Bethany on the other side of Jordan (John 1:28). John also baptised at 'Aenon near Salim' (John 3:23).

The testing / temptation took place in (1) the desert region of the lower Jordan Valley, (2) a high mountain (possibly one of the sheer abrupt cliffs near Jericho that present an unsurpassed panorama) and (3) the pinnacle of the temple, from which the priests sounded the trumpet to call the city's attention to important events.

Three key concepts are clear from Jesus' baptism, and call, and testing. The whole focus of this event is on Jesus' 'commissioning' not just a public revelation of His Mission. He is the Davidic Messiah, the Son of God, and the Servant whose mission is to bear the sins of His people.

Again there is no suggestion that Jesus became Son of God at His Baptism. It was a pivotal experience not in that it made Jesus anything which He was not already, but that it launched Him on the Mission for which He had long prepared, and defined that Mission in terms of Old Testament expectation.

Satan's intention was no doubt to make Jesus do wrong, persuade Jesus to do wrong in the testing in the desert. But we do well to remember in all these events that the initiative was with God (Matthew 4:1). and the whole emphasis of the narrative is on the testing of Jesus' reaction to His Messianic vocation as Son of God. The initiative always lies with God, not with Satan. I feel this is a vital and crucial truth.

Certainly in the 'Testing of God's Son' in Matthew's order of events we have a specific examination of Jesus' newly revealed relationship with His Father also we note that Satan 'drops his disguise as it were', to reveal his true aim and purpose.

The focus of the testing of Jesus in the desert is on the Old Testament Scriptures. Parallels between Jesus' experience and that of Moses (vv2, 8). are clearly seen. Forty days and forty nights. The number itself recalls the experience of Moses (Exodus 24:18; 34:28). and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8). as well as the 40 years of Israel's temptation/testing in the desert (Deuteronomy 8:2-3). We note also that Jesus as the Son of God, could surely claim with absolute confidence the physical protection with God promises in (Psalm 91:11-12 and throughout the Psalm). to those who fully trust and believe in Him. Satan strategy is centred around these wonderful promises of protection and safety. So why not try it by forcing God's hand (and so silence any lingering doubts about His relationship with God)? However to do so would indeed be to tempt God.

The Son of God can live only in a relationship of trust which needs no test. Christians perplexed by the apparently thin line between 'the prayer of faith' and 'putting God to the test' should fully understand and note that the devil's suggestion was of an artificially created crisis, not of trusting God in situations which result from faithful and obedient ministry, service and witness.

To focus on the theme of my essay I will investigate the second testing of Jesus in Jerusalem at this point of writing.

The choosing of the place is evidence again of the sly cunning of the devil. 'Then the devil took Him to the Holy City and had him stand on the highest point of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God", he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: He will command angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

"The Holy City," and in the Holy City "the Temple," and in the Temple the "Highest Point." Every sentence in the narrative is descriptive, and carries its own particular value. What this place meant to Jesus is difficult for us to fully understand. Jerusalem was the very centre of the deepest life of the nation, all the hopes and aspirations of the thinking people were there. The devout child of Abraham, in whatever part of the world he found himself in, turned his face to the City of Jerusalem as his heart went out to the God of his Father's in prayer. Thousands of Jewish people would join in the prayer of the Psalmist (137:5) "If I forget Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget her skill".

Jesus of Nazareth was certainly no exception to that rule. He loved the City of Jerusalem. He came to it again and again, and when at last its people's finally rejected Him, as he knew would happen, and it was necessary that He should pronounce it's doom. He did so, heart and voice enveloped in emotion, and the curse pronounced was wet with the tears of His love and compassion.

To this place the devil conducted Him. This place that reminded Him of all God's past dealings with His People, and the City which was the centre of the promises of God through the patriarchs and the Hebrew prophets, through the sweet singers and psalmists and writers of old. Here Satan brought Jesus to attack His trust in God!

If the City was dear to the heart of most Jewish people, the Temple was even more so. It was the centre of the City. Indeed, the City was great, primarily because it contained and was built and gathered around, the Temple. Of all the nations on the face of the earth only Israel as a nation was a theocracy, they were under the immediate government of God, and His place of communication and revelation was of course the Temple. It was in a very real sense the peculiar glory of Jerusalem. Even when spiritual values were low,

there still remained in the heart of many Jewish people a veneration for that Temple, all that was worthwhile, all that was the highest and best in their chequered yet wonderful history, experience, and hope was here. It was indeed the very House of God.

Just how precious it was to the Saviour is recorded for us in many ways, especially, perhaps, by the fact that at the beginning and the close of His ministry Jesus cleansed it from the traffickers. (How and why I will cover later in the essay). How often Jesus would stand in its courts, and walk down its porches, and speak to all the people in crowds at times, to small groups and to individuals as the situation presented itself. The Temple was the centre of the national life, the place at which the religion of the Jewish people had its supreme manifestation and expression, the splendid symbol of that precious principle of faith in God, on which the whole nation had been created, and to this sacred place the devil brought Jesus.

Again I am forcibly aware that in these incredible events the initiative was with God Himself.

Place With A Past.

We are not surprised that Matthew the Jew, calls Jerusalem "The Holy City". Many cherished memories are associated with Jerusalem or Zion. Was it not the city where David, Christ's great ancestor, had established his throne? Had not God promised to dwell there? This was the city to which the tribes went up to give thanks to the name of Jehovah.

Pinpointing the Pinnacle.

To this city the devil by God's sufferance has brought Jesus, and has set Him on the very pinnacle (literally wing) - the temple had no pinnacles as such, of the outer wall of the entire temple complex. The exact spot is not given. It may have been the roof-edge of Herod's royal portico, overhanging the Kedron Valley, and looking down some four hundred and fifty feet, a "dizzy height," as Josephus points out (Antiq XV.412). This place was located southeast of the temple court, perhaps at or near the place from which, according to tradition, James the Lord's brother, was hurled down.

Satan, Sandals and Sharp-edged Stones.

"Since you are the Son of God," whispers the tempter "throw your self down." His reasoning was probably along the line, "You will be able to prove your confidence in the Father's protection a confidence which Jesus had just affirmed (verse 4), "Beside, if Scripture, which You so readily quote, is true, no harm will come to You, for it is written, 'He will give His angels instructions concerning You.' They will not merely arrest your fall. No, they will do more. Very tenderly they will bear You up in their hands, lest You, wearing only sandals, should hurt Yourself by striking your foot against the sharp-edged stones at the bottom of the drop."

Shadow of the Almighty. Safety of all Saints.

The passage quoted is from Psalm 91:11,12. As quoted by the devil, there is, an omission, which is important for us to grasp. Psalm 91:11 ends with the words "to guard you in all your ways." Matthew 4:6 contains nothing to correspond to this. Luke 4:10 merely has "to guard you." So we note in both these Gospels the words "in all your ways" are left out. When these words are included, God promises to protect the righteous man in all his righteous ways; for these are the ways of the man who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, abides under the shadow of the Almighty and has found his refuge in Jehovah, upon whom he has set his love. They are the ways of the saint (Proverbs 2:8).

the good man (Proverbs 2:20). It is to such a man that the words apply, "He will give his angels charge concerning you. to guard you in all your ways." When these words "in all your ways" are omitted, it becomes easier to interpret the passage as if it were a promise of God to protect the righteous no matter what he does! So read, the passage would seem to correspond more closely with what the devil wants Jesus to do.

Rushing in Rashness is be Rejected.

However, this point is probably of minor importance, since what Satan omits amounts to far more than a few words in a quotation. The devil omits any reference to the Scriptural truth that the Lord does not condone but condemns and will punish reckless rashness, or any trifling with divine providence, or any rushing into totally unwarranted danger. The following Biblical incidents will emphasis this important point. 1...(Genesis 13:10, 11)

"Lot looked up and saw the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt towards Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of Jordan and set out towards the east." -- Rushing into a rash decision, a bad choice. 2...(Psalm 19:13) "Keep your servant also from wilful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgressions. -- Prevent wilful rash and sinful actions in my life.

3....(Daniel 4:28-33) "All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken away from you. You will be driven away from the people and will live with wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most high is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes." Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird." --- Instant retribution for proud and rash words of mouth by the most powerful man in the world at that time. God reduced the reigning monarch to a rummaging misfit, from governor to one who grovelled in the grass! "And those who walk in pride He is able to humble." states (Daniel 4:37). in stark reality.

4.... (Romans 1:30). "They are gossips, slanderers, God haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless." -- God will give to each person according to what he has done. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (Romans 2:6, 9). Here we have Paul writing in a direct manner as always, and dealing with the sinful heart of men and the inevitable consequences of their ruthless rashness. 5.... (2Peter 2:10). This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord". -- This is especially true, the arrogant heretics of Peter's day are highlighted in this 5th. example from Scripture of God's hatred of wickedness at every level of human behaviour and activity. This behaviour of constantly trifling with God's providence on every level of behaviour will one day reap its reward. A new Channel 5

TV. show is now been transmitted, a so-called comedy programme with the title 'God Almighty' a dreadful choice of title thought up by evil, arrogant producers and writers! I am reminded of a Red Shield outreach by the Salvation Army some time ago with the theme across the nation 'For God's Sake Give!' Whoever thought of that particular phrase was lacking in tact, discernment or reverence. Rash choices, rash actions, each testing God's Grace in a very off-hand manner. Foolish men and woman moving in circles of unwarranted danger.

Human action of this manner will inevitably result eventually in Divine reaction. The day of ignorance and wilful rashness in sin will give way to the day in God's plan of reality and retribution. Only the acceptance of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ can prevent such a negative and final conclusion in these serious matters concerning fallen humanity. Only the Cross can cancel the indictment against wilful men. The responsibility of preaching the Gospel, is of course with every Gospel preacher called by the Lord to minister to their own generation. What an awesome calling is ours.

Satan's proposal, here at the Temple was subtle and calculating. Seeking to prove the Father by luring His Son to take part in a skydiving exercise from the very summit of the sacred building.

Jesus however does not slip into the entrapment, He knew to do so would be substituting rashness and presumption for His complete and entire faith and trust in His Father. It would display a false trust in His Father in this second wilderness temptation, and would have been an act of rashness at the very highest level, for it would have meant nothing less than to risk self-destruction through false trust.

The Lord Jesus, rejected the sly proposal of the devil, and redemption's plans and purpose's remained securely intact and on course, His sinless body remained the perfect sacrifice. His precious Blood would be shed on the Cross at Calvary, not on the sharp jagged rocks and boulders laying at the foot of the Temple precipice. Jesus refused to experiment with His Father by compliance with such a Satanic proposal. So much was at risk here, and the Lord Jesus in absolute control gained a wonderful victory. The Master was masterly in dealing with malignancy.

Rabbinical Tradition Lacks Real Validity.

"When the king, Messiah, reveals Himself, then he comes and stands on the roof of the holy place" states an ancient rabbinical tradition, and based on the statement of old, a number of commentators and writers are of the opinion that the tempter was trying to suggest that Jesus, by casting Himself from the Temple's pinnacle, would establish himself as being indeed the Messiah, for, after a miraculous safe, soft landing, the crowd, having watched the descent with bated breath, would shout with excitement, "Look, He is unhurt. He must be the Messiah!"

For Jesus, so the argument continues, this would then be an easy way to success. The cross with its shame would be avoided, the crown with its splendour, obtained without struggle, pain or agony.

It is an interesting Jewish theory only, for there is no valid support for it. No crowds or spectators are even mentioned in the Gospel narratives. More importantly, Jesus, in his reply does not refer to anything of the kind. Like so many fanciful and colourful theories the entire idea is better dismissed. Luke 16:31 argues against it "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

The reason why Jesus peremptorily rejects the devil's proposal is clearly stated in Matthew 4:7. Jesus said to him, 'It is also written, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.' A quotation from (Deuteronomy 6:16). which in turn speaks of the situation of the Israelites described in Exodus 17:1-7. how at a place called Massah and Meribah the people made trial of the Lord and rebelled against Moses because of the lack of drinking water. They accused Moses of having cruelly brought them, their children, and their cattle, out of Egypt and into the desert, to destroy them! They were almost ready to stone him to death, and instead of trusting the Lord, they rashly, insolently and provocatively challenged God, by saying "Is Jehovah among us or not?".

Jesus knows that similar behaviour on His part, by unnecessarily exposing Himself to danger just to test and see what His Father's reaction might be, whether He would be with Him, or not, would amount to grievous transgression. In that it has absolutely nothing to do with humbly trusting in the protecting care and safety promised in Psalm 91. He therefore calmly answers the tempter with Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:16).

False Confidence or Faith Centred in Jesus.

Daily life all around us displays many and ample examples of false and rash confidence, similar to that which the devil urged Jesus to exercise. A person will pray with much passion for sound health and a fit body, whilst ignoring the common sense rules of health, such as a good diet, and regular exercise. Or he will expect God's blessing on his life and neglect every means of grace provided for him. study of Scripture, attendance at the House of the Lord, living a life that benefits other people in any way and is self-centred. Again some plead for their families and children, but fail to speak or lovingly witness to them at any time or place. Some put themselves in dubious environments, books, TV, computer inter-net sites, then ask for holiness in their life' s:- "You should not put the Lord your God to the test" is the answer to these ongoing problems.

JESUS VISITS THE FEAST OF THE TABERNACLES IN JERUSALEM

Mark, Matthew, and Luke, we discover in our studies in the New Testament, present their Gospels records in two parts, the first section dealing with the Galilean ministry of the Lord Jesus and the second part is always associated with the final intense conflict in Jerusalem.

The Gospel of John is much different in style and record, and details are arranged differently, since John mentions several occasions on which Jesus comes from the beautiful areas of Galilee up to Jerusalem in Judea, before His final and significant journey to the Holy City. These occasions are known in general as the Judean Ministry. Jesus is portrayed as coming to the Jerusalem feasts and festivals in the Temple with thousands of like-minded devout Jews. It was the custom and part of their way of religious observance. They did what their father's had done before them. It was important and meaningful to fulfil the Law of Moses, Jesus, in every way and on every occasion upheld the law in these important issues He was perfect and blameless. So Jesus came as a visitor and indeed as a devout pilgrim to Jerusalem, coming up to the City only to attend the Feasts.

John tells of three feasts: two of these are the spring feast of the Passover, which

provided both the occasion for the cleansing of the Temple (John 2:13-16). When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the Temple courts He found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So He made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the Temple area, both sheep and cattle: He scattered the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves He said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn My Father's House into a market!". Also the setting for the dramatic culmination of Jesus' life; and the autumn feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2-4) But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to Him, "You ought to leave here (Galilee) and go to Judea, so your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things show yourself to the world." The brethren mentioned here were His brothers, the sons of Mary and Joseph, and their statement reveals how utterly ignorant they remained of His purpose and mission. For them, as for the majority of the people of the times, spiritual insight did not exist. Their insistent request suggests that an element of doubt, perhaps scorn, maybe a desire for self-importance, were all seeking an outlet. It was as though they said, "If what is said of you be true, why waste time, precious time, in the pretty but insignificant villages of Galilee? Go to the City of Jerusalem where thousands can watch your miracles. Then if the rumours be really true, they can make you a king, and we can find a better job in the administration of your kingdom. If all they say of you be untrue then the sooner the falsehood is exposed, the better for all concerned." It seems unbelievable that these men had lived with Jesus for thirty years and yet knew nothing about Him. For them, as for so many people today their familiarity with Jesus had bred contempt.

Looking at the Reason for the Secrecy of Jesus' Action at this Point in Ministry Therefore Jesus told them, The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify that what it does is evil (John 7:6-7).

The Lord's days were all planned in the Council Chambers of Heaven. He did nothing that was not planned, without thoughtful preparation. The time and opportunity to go to the Feast were not ripe at that moment on the divine clock. However since they did always the things they desired, their time was always ready. They were men without conviction, discernment, courage. They never criticized the world and never denounced the devil. They 'minded their own business' and never made enemies. Therefore the world had no reason to hate them. They waited to see which party would get into power, and then support it! Moral issues and spiritual values had little or no appeal. God could look after His affairs; they would look after their affairs. It was an uncomplicated arrangement and a very popular one too. So it is today by the general population of people in every nation across the face of the earth. Jesus was so wonderfully different. He came to do the Will of God His Father; He denounced evil. He was spiritual; they were carnal. He was from above; they were of this world - earthly

You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for Me the right time has not yet come. Having said this, He stayed in Galilee. However, after His brothers had left for the Feast, He went also, not publicly, but in secret (John 7:8-10).

It was required of every male in Israel to present himself before the Lord at least three times a year. At other times attendance was optional at minor religious ceremonies, but at the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles attendance was compulsory. "Three

times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in a place which He shall choose; in the Feast of unleavened bread; and in the Feast of Weeks, and in the Feast of Tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty" (Deuteronomy 16:16).

Therefore in sending His brethren to the Feast, Jesus, as He was always careful to do, complied with the requirements of the Mosaic Law. Any other instruction to them would have invited and merited criticism from the Jewish leaders. Jesus did not say that He would not attend the Feast; He merely said, "I will not go up yet" Jesus was not refusing to go up to the Feast, but was refusing to go in the way His brothers suggested - as a pilgrim. When He went, it would be to deliver a prophetic message from God His Father, for which He awaited the "right time". People generally travelled to Jerusalem in groups or caravans. All such would be given a warm and joyous welcome, for this was the Feast of joy. Jesus desired to arrive secretly - without undue attention, quietly, - His Father's purpose could be better served that way. The vast majority of visitors to the Feast travelled the highway; Jesus probably travelled along the side roads and byways. Sometimes the longest way round is the shortest way home!

Jesus refused to be intimidated by the rumours which were rife in the City of Jerusalem, or the sinister whispers in the crowded market place. Premonitions of fear and trouble were in the hearts of many people. The same sense of unease is still prevalent in Jewish and Palestinian lives in the City. 2003 AD presents so many threats to the people. Rumours have been replaced with rockets and whispers by warheads. Life giving ministry of Jesus is no longer the supposed threat, it is now the life threatening ministrations of world leaders. President George Bush, Prime Minister Tony Blair, President Saddam Hussein, and the hawks and doves of the Security Council who have spoken and written millions of words about peace. When in reality there is no peace. Real peace comes only from the Prince of Peace there is no other source of true peace. Preachers of the Gospel are of world importance because their message is the continuing one of the Preacher from Nazareth and Jerusalem. Our pulpits should be places of life and peace, not war zones of theological thought and debate. Biblical Gospel ministry will replace fear with personal peace in the hearts and minds of those who receive the message in faith.

Not until halfway through the Feast of the Tabernacles did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begins to teach. The Jews were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?" John 7:14-15.

"The fifteenth day of the this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord" (Leviticus 23:34). The great feast at the prescribed time of the year had been in progress for about three days when Jesus made His way through the crowds and passed all the leafy shelters (tabernacles - tents) in which people lived throughout the seven days of the feast. All were celebrating the completion of the harvest and commemorating God's goodness to the people during the desert wanderings of Leviticus 23:33-43; Deuteronomy 16:13-15. One is acutely aware of a great sense of history in every biblical event, we are told the reason, the time, the place, the people involved, the how, the why, the where and the when. One can almost see the village clock/sun-dial, read the city signpost and district street name plate. The Who's Who of the day is opened at the correct page for our information and understanding. The drama of Redemption takes place in the bright Judean sunlight, not in the murky shadows of the dark and

silent night.

The crowds would be at their maximum. Teaching in the temple courts at such a time would reach many. This was a time, the half -holy days in the middle of the Feast, for foreign pilgrims, coming from great distances to savour the occasion and where their Temple contributions were paid, received and counted. As the local Jerusalemite would look on with proud self-consciousness, not unmingled with kindly patronage, on the swarthy strangers, yet fellow -countrymen, or the eager-eyed Galilean curiously stare after them, the travelling visitors would no doubt return the gaze with mingled awe and interest on the ever moving scene before them.

All day long the smoke of the burning, smouldering sacrifices rose in a column visible between the Mount of Olives and Zion. Whilst the voice and chant of Levites and responses of the Hallel by the masses of people and the clear note of the Priests' silver trumpets could be heard and responded to in positive worship. The City at the centre of the world, as it were, lifted a united voice of worship, and among the crowds at that place the One who would in a short time change the world and bring truth in depth into worship.

In the deepening shadows of the evening a lovely picture is painted for us in Chiaroscuro the study of light and dark, the vast Temple buildings stood out illuminated by the great Candelabras that burned brightly in the Court of the Woman and by the glare of the torches, the night would be alive with songs, hymns and dancing. Joy could literally be seen and heard at the Feast of Tabernacles known as the Feast.

Having covered some of the historical facts and positive elements of the Feast, I will now look at some of the negative aspects. By doing so I follow the wonderful advice given by Dr D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones who was utterly devoted to the Bible as the Word of God. He delights in the things of God. Along side many writers, preachers, teachers and personal friends in the Lord I feel a debt of love for such servants of God.

Early on the 14th Tishri (corresponding to our September or early October) all the festive pilgrims had arrived. Hospitality sought and found. Guests welcomed and entertained, all things required for the Feast to be got ready. Booths must be built, erected everywhere in court, on the flat roof of the houses, in the street and square; leafy dwellings everywhere, to give remembrance of the wilderness journey, and now the goodly land. Only one place was not covered with green garlands of the Spring into which the land had burst. The dreaded castle, Antonia, standing above the Temple, frowned out across the City. The place was a symbol of loathing, how the Jew both local and visitor hated that castle, which guarded and dominated his own City and Temple. Roman eagles standing high on the ramparts of the castle, were not the most popular bird around.

Israel were looking to the Temple and indeed above the Temple to the outline of Antonia on the skyline but failed in general to read the signs of the times. Having eyes they could not see and ears they could not hear, among all the sights and sounds of the great Feast they were both blind and deaf. Unaware of the day of their loving and merciful visitation by Jesus the Messiah, Son of David, Son of Man, Son of God. Of all the Feasts on the Jewish calendar the Feast of Tabernacles should have clearly have pointed them to the future.

Again it is correct for me to express my indebtedness to the written work of Dr. Alfred Edersheim M.A., D.D., Ph.D. I have gleaned so much Jewish insight from the Jewish author, his descriptive knowledge has helped me in witness, preaching and writing over

the years. His love of our Lord Jesus Christ and Old and New Testament History, indeed all things Biblical deserves and receives my acknowledgement.

Harvest, its completion and thanksgiving, always points to the future, the Rabbis admitted this fact. The seventy sacrificial bullocks offered on the altars in the Temple they again regarded as the seventy nations' of heathendom. Of vital importance was the outpouring of the water which gave the whole festival the name of 'House of Outpouring', was a picture of the outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord to come in due time. As the brief night hours of the great Temple illumination closed, a solemn testimony made before the God of Israel against the unbelieving heathen and heathenism itself presented a moving scene. Levites played musical instruments, grouped on the fifteen steps of the stairway that led from the Court of Israel to the Court of the Woman. At the first cockcrowing at dawn two Priests blew a threefold blast with their silver trumpets, another blast on the tenth step, and yet another threefold blast as they entered the Court of the Woman. Still playing as they marched through the Court to the Beautiful Gate, stopping here they faced westward to the Holy Place.

With one voice they spoke out loud; 'Our fathers, who were in this place turned their backs on the Sanctuary of Jehovah, and their faces eastward and worshipped toward the sun, -- But our eyes are towards Jehovah'

So the night and early morning events taking place were very symbolical: the beautiful Temple illumination shone out into the darkness of the night of heathendom. At first light, along with trumpet note and the tramp of feet the great procession marched to the limits of the Temple, at that place turning again, made a protest against heathenism, whilst making a confession to the God of Israel.

All the noise and marching movement appears impressive in the first instant, but as we shall see in the scenes that follow, with the Lord Jesus, it was all to prove very shallow and almost meaningless. His ministry would teach, that believing hearts are of more value than marching feet, and that revealed truth more important than 'top Cs' from a trumpet!

General feeling among the people, both local to the city and those who had come up for the feast, was that the Man from Nazareth would be there to continue His ministry. No one spoke openly or freely for fear of the Jewish leaders and rulers. So the whispering and murmurings added to the quiet confusion and general sense of unease, discrete questions led to opinions offered, 'He was a good man' or 'He was a fraud and was leading many gullible people astray with His ministry'. Jerusalem had become a City of conjecture and speculation.

One voice would change all this in seconds. The Son of David appeared in the Temple Colonnade. The porches of the Temple was an ideal place for public ministry and debate. All along the inside of the Temple wall which formed the Temple enclosure ran a double colonnade, columns of white marble, twenty-five cubits high, and covered with beams of cedar-wood, provided a place to walk, or to sit on the benches provided. Many of the crowd would simply stand still and listen. For the wonderful common law enabling speaking and teaching in Israel gave Jesus every right to the speak publicly in that place and at that time.

The Clock in the Colonnade

Jesus in perfect timing with the clock of Old Testament promise and prophecy began to minister to the listening Jewish people, some who were interested in the Revelation of

Divine truth, along side others who were harbouring bitterness, resentment, scheming hatred and opposition, to the positive unfolding words of Eternal Life.

Wheat and chaff stood together in the Colonnades. Sheep and lambs mixed with the slinking wolves in the shadows of the Great Temple Buildings of Solomon, which Jesus called His Father's House. The same situation is repeated in this generation in every place where the soul saving, life giving Gospel is ministered by God anointed Spirit filled preacher's and Herald's of the Cross. Some things will never change.

More Questions Than Answers.

The reaction of a number of the listeners displayed their superficiality in matters, with their appalling references to academic training and learning, again in this day and age this ghastly arrogance is prevalent.

"And the Jews marvelled saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned" (John 7:15)

Obviously the words of Jesus had caused their curiosity to be shaken and stirred, people like this always grapple for further points of clarification. The pure golden light of truth is never enough for them to simply respond in a positive believing manner. In reality the reasoning behind the question asked was, "How can Jesus say and do such things since He never studied in our very own established and respected Rabbinical college?" Here we have a tremendous truth which we note with interest. Is academic training in religious studies of more value than active testimony to the Redeemer's Salvation in one's life.

Academia can, like the law, be an ass at times. The world by wisdom knew not God and this incident in the Colonnades is a classic example of that on-going truth.

Biblical revelation is to co-existence of Jesus the Son with His Father in past eternities, where from the heavenly universities of glory and majesty His wisdom designed every planet, every flower, the vast mountain ranges that stiffen the world's crust; His creative power and instinct had given music to the birds, the wind and the waves of the seas and oceans. These concepts were beyond the grasp of their comprehension

Man Made Moulds.

Man is apt and happy to manufacture a mould, and while this man-made process may be neat, tidy, extremely useful and convenient, but man should never be surprised if at times of His own choosing God makes His own mould! Here we need a gentle word of caution, for these words of Scripture have become the spiritual hobbyhorse and sounding board for all kinds of strange, even silly statements by the over zealous person.

The fact that the Lord brought John Baptist from the undiscovered school in the wilderness, did not automatically infer that every recognised school was accursed and to be shunned. God is the God of the unexpected; there is variety in all His acts.

If the world's only flower were a daisy, if the world's only bird were a starling, if the world's only animal were a donkey, what a strange queer world it would be!

The Lord called Elijah from small mountain village; Luke from a medical school; Saul of Tarsus from an established Rabbinical college; Amos from the fields; and many others from universities, steel works, coal mines, fishing boats, computer courses, art schools; and a hundred other places. Of course education is excellent; and academic distinction to be sort after; but primarily the mark for which we should all look for, is the hand of God upon a man's ministry.

The Last Day of the Feast

The seventh day of the feast was a great day of celebration. (The eighth day was one of "solemn assembly"—Lev. 23:36; see Num. 29:35). Each morning of the feast, at the time of the sacrifice, the priests would draw water in a golden vessel from the Pool of Siloam and carry it to the temple to be poured out. This commemorated the wonderful supply of water God gave the Jews in the wilderness. This seventh day was known as "The Great Hosanna" and climaxed the feast. It takes little imagination to grasp what must have happened when Jesus cried out, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink!" (v. 37) as the priests poured out the water. Christ was the Rock out of which the waters flowed (Ex. 17:1–7; 1 Cor. 10:4). He was smitten on the cross that the Spirit of life might be given to save and satisfy thirsty sinners. In the Bible, water for cleansing symbolizes the Word of God (John 13:1–17; 15:3); water for drinking represents the Spirit of God (John 7:37–38).

Instead of heeding His gracious invitation to come, the people argued, and there was division among them. Some believed in Him, some rejected. (See Matt. 10:31–39 and Luke 12:51–52.) The soldiers could not arrest Him because His word gripped their hearts (v. 46). Because the Jewish leaders rejected Christ, they shut the door of salvation to others who followed their bad example (Matt. 23:13).

Nicodemus enters the picture again, and this time we see him defending Christ's legal privileges. In John 3, he was in the darkness of confusion; but here he is experiencing the dawn of conviction, willing to give Christ a fair chance. Because of this, Nicodemus learned the truth, for a willingness to obey the Word is the secret of learning God's truth (v. 17). In John 19 we see Nicodemus in the daylight of confession, openly identifying himself with Christ. How did he come to make this decision? He studied the Word and asked for God to teach him. The rulers told him, "Search and look!" and that is just what he did. Anyone who will read and obey the Word of God will move out of darkness into God's marvelous light.

The Triumph of the Final Week in Jerusalem

This description of our Lord's "Triumphal Entry" may have surprised Mark's Roman readers, who were accustomed to the glory of the "Roman Triumph." This was the official welcoming parade given to a victorious Roman general whose armies killed at least 5,000 enemy soldiers, gained new territory for Rome, and brought home rich trophies and important prisoners. The general rode in a golden chariot, surrounded by his officers; and in the parade, he displayed his treasures and prisoners. The Roman priests would be there, offering incense to their gods. Paul alludes to the Roman Triumph in 2 Cor. 2:14–17.

But our Lord's ride into Jerusalem involved a donkey, some garments and branches

thrown on the ground, and the praises of some nondescript Passover pilgrims. It was the only time Jesus permitted a public demonstration on His behalf, and He did it to force the Jewish religious leaders to act during the Passover when it was ordained that He should die (Matt. 26:3–5).

Mark does not quote Zech. 9:9, but he does quote Ps. 118:25–26 (vv. 9–10), a Messianic Psalm. Hosanna means, "Save now, we pray!" ("God save the king!") When Jesus rode into the city, He proclaimed His Kingship, but He also signed His own death warrant.

The Tree

At first sight, this is a puzzling miracle. Passover was not the season for figs, yet the Son of God had hoped to find fruit on the tree. When He did not find any, He used His divine power to destroy the tree instead of helping it to become fruitful. Actually, the whole episode was a sermon in action. The tree represents the nation of Israel (Hos. 9:10, 16; Nahum 3:12), which was producing no fruit to the glory of God. Its spiritual roots were dead (v. 20; Matt. 3:10), and it could not produce fruit.

But Jesus also used the miracle to teach His disciples some practical lessons about faith and prayer. Mountains represent great difficulties that must be removed (Zech. 4:7), and it is our faith in God that enables us to overcome. But faith in God is not enough; we must also have forgiveness toward others (vv. 25–26). We do not earn God's forgiveness by forgiving others, but forgiving others shows that we have a humble heart before God.

The Temple

Jesus investigated the temple and then returned the next day to cleanse it. He had cleansed the temple early in His ministry (John 2:13–22), but the religious merchants came back again. Mere outward reformation does not last unless the heart is changed. What began as a service to foreign Jews (who needed to change money or purchase sacrifices) had become a business that had no place in the house of God. People used the temple as a shortcut from the Mount of Olives (v. 16), and the stalls and tables cluttered up the Court of the Gentiles where the Jews should have been witnessing about the true God to their Gentile neighbours.

In His indictment against the leaders (v. 17), Jesus quoted Isaiah (56:7) and Jeremiah (7:11), both of whom had condemned the nation for its sins in the temple (Isa. 1; Jer. 7). A "den of thieves" is the place thieves go to hide when they have committed a crime. The religious leaders were using the worship of God as a cover for their sins!

The Test

The religious leaders were angry at what Jesus did and said and were determined to destroy Him (v. 18); but first, they had to get enough evidence to bring charges against Him. It was all a question of authority (vv. 28–29, 33): What right did He have to cleanse the temple and call it His house? He was claiming to be God!

Jesus took them back three years, when John the Baptist was ministering to the people. "Where did John get the authority for his baptism?" Jesus asked. "Was it from God or from men?" (v. 30) This put the scribes, elders, and chief priests in a dilemma; no matter how they answered, they were in trouble! These leaders may have forgotten their decision about John the Baptist, but their decision did not forget them. It finally caught up with them and condemned them. They had not submitted to John's ministry (Luke 7:29–30); therefore, they were not ready to receive Jesus and trust Him. In their unbelief and cowardice, they had even allowed John to be killed by Herod Antipas; and soon they would ask Pilate to crucify Jesus.

God's Passover Lamb (John 1:29) was being "examined" by the Jewish leaders, and He proved to be perfect (1 Peter 1:18–19), although they did not accept Him. How tragic it is when religious people cling to their traditions and reject the living truth when it is so evident before their very eyes. In answering their many questions, the Lord Jesus was actually revealing the sins in their hearts.

Selfishness

Jesus knew that His enemies wanted to kill Him; and in this parable, He revealed their sinful desire to destroy Him and claim the inheritance for themselves (John 11:45–53). The image of the vineyard immediately identifies the nation of Israel (Isa. 5:1–7; Ps. 80:8–16; Jer. 2:21), and the tenants are the leaders of the nation (v. 10; Acts 4:11).

See Lev. 19:23–25 for regulations about harvesting. An owner had to receive a certain amount of "token payment" in order to maintain his rights over the land. By refusing to pay him, the tenants stripped away his rights to the land. If the heir died, the land would then fall to the residents. It was a selfish scheme that put possessions ahead of people.

Jesus quoted from Ps. 118, a Messianic Psalm (118:22–23; and compare Mark 11:9 with Ps. 118:25–26); and He allowed His hearers to pronounce their own sentence (Matt. 21:41). By applying to Himself the image of the cornerstone, Jesus was affirming that He was indeed the Messiah (Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7). This was blasphemy to the religious leaders, and they would have arrested Him then and there were it not for their fear of the people.

Hypocrisy

The Pharisees opposed Rome while the Herodians (a political party) cooperated with Rome. The only thing that brought them together was their common enemy, Jesus Christ (see Luke 23:12). The Greek word for "catch" in v. 13 conveys an image of a trap for hunting game. The committee from the Pharisees and the Herodians thought they could trap Jesus with a question that had political and religious connotations.

Knowing themselves to be God's chosen people, the orthodox Jews despised having to pay taxes to Rome. It meant acknowledging Rome's power over their nation—something they were too proud to admit (John 8:33)—as well as supporting pagan idolatry. If Jesus

approved paying taxes to Rome, He would be in trouble with His own people; but if He opposed the paying of taxes, He would be in trouble with Rome.

Knowing their hypocrisy, our Lord replied in a way that not only avoided the horns of the dilemma but drove home to His questioners their responsibility to the state. Since they were using Caesar's coins, they were admitting Caesar's authority over them; and when they paid their taxes, they were only giving back to Caesar what he had first made available to them. Taxes are not a gift to the government; they are a debt we pay in return for services rendered (police and fire protection, social agencies, defence, etc.). But at the same time, the image of God is stamped on each human; and we must pay back to God the things that are God's. Since it is God who established human government for our good, we are obligated to respect officials and obey the law (Rom. 13; 1 Tim. 2:1–6; 1 Peter 2:13–17). Daniel Webster said, "Whatever makes men good Christians makes them good citizens."

Ignorance

This is the only place where Mark mentions the Sadducees in his Gospel. They accepted the authority of only the five Books of Moses, and they did not believe in the resurrection of the body or in the existence of angels (Acts 23:8). Based on Deut. 25:7–10, their question was hypothetical, devised only for the purpose of trying to catch Jesus in His speech. Instead of revealing His ignorance, it revealed their ignorance of God's Word and power.

To Jesus, the answer to every question was in the Scriptures and not in man's own thinking (Isa. 8:20; see Mark 10:19; 12:10). Supremacy of Scripture always.

He referred them to Ex. 3:1–12 and drew the logical conclusion that since Jehovah is the God of the living, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were alive. There is life after death and therefore a hope of future resurrection. But resurrection is not reconstruction and the continuation of life as it now is. God's children will not become angels, for we shall be like Christ (1 John 3:1–3); but we shall be like the angels in that we will not marry or have families. It will be a whole new kind of life.

Shallowness (12:28–40)

The Pharisees tried one more question, one that the rabbis had been debating for a long time. Of the 613 commandments found in the Law (365 negative, 248 positive), which one is the most important? Jesus replied with the traditional Jewish "statement of faith" (the Shema) found in Deut. 6:4. It was recited morning and evening by pious Jews. He then added Lev. 19:18; for if we love God, we will show it by loving our neighbour (Luke 10:25–37). One of the scribes got the message clearly and boldly agreed with Jesus, but the others missed the point completely. They had a shallow view of the real meaning of the Law and failed to understand the importance of obeying from the heart.

Jesus asked the final—and most important—question, and it put them to silence (Matt.

22:46; Rom. 3:19). When He rode into the city, Jesus had been called "Son of David" (Matt. 21:9) by the crowds, and the children had echoed this cry in the temple (Matt. 21:15). This was, of course, a Messianic title, which explains why the Pharisees wanted to silence the people (Luke 19:39–40). Quoting from Ps. 110, Jesus asked them to explain how David's Lord could also be David's son; and they would not answer. The answer is that David's Lord had to become man, but the "theologians" refused to face the implications of both the question and the answer. Their knowledge of the Word was shallow and their submission to it very insincere.

Jesus closed this "debate" with a warning (vv. 38–40) and an example (vv. 41–44), both of which exposed the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. When you contrast the conduct of the widow and that of the scribes, you see what God values most. For a detailed exposure of the Pharisees [see Matt. 23].

The believers who first read Mark's Gospel were being persecuted and were tempted to give up and compromise their witness. This version of the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24–25) was just the encouragement they needed to remain true faithful to the Lord. The sermon focuses on the last days and describes the first part (13:5–13), the middle (13:14–18), and the last part of the tribulation, leading up to the Lord's return to the earth (13:19–27). But the sermon also gives us principles that apply to suffering saints in every age. Jesus issued four warnings for His people to heed in times of persecution and opposition.

Don't be deceived (13:1–8)

The beautiful temple was desolate (Matt. 23:38) and would be destroyed (v. 2). Four of the disciples asked when it would be destroyed and what sign would announce this disastrous event. They thought that the destruction of the temple, the end of the age, and the coming of the kingdom would occur at the same time; so Jesus explained to them the general course of the last days. But His greatest concern was that His people not be deceived by the false Christ's that would appear and promise to lead them to victory and glory. He also pointed out the "false signs" that could lead them astray (vv. 7–8). This admonition relates primarily to the Jews, for the church must watch out for false teachers, not false Christ's (2 Peter 2); and we are looking for the Saviour and not for signs (Phil.

Don't Be Afraid

Times of persecution are times for proclamation, and we must not be afraid to declare the Gospel and acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord. The Holy Spirit helps those who walk with the Lord and sincerely want to glorify Him. This is seen many times in the Book of Acts.

Verse 10 is not a requirement for the coming of the Lord. Jesus was stating a divine determination and assurance: in spite of all that Satan does during the "time of Jacob's trouble," God's Word shall be proclaimed and His will accomplished. Nor is v. 11 an excuse for shabby ministry! Preachers and teachers should study, meditate, and pray and

not "trust" the Spirit to give them their messages at the last minute. Jesus is giving us encouragement for the difficult times when we face danger and do not know what to say. The promise in v. 13 is not a condition for salvation, for it applies primarily to believers during the tribulation. "The end" in v. 7 refers to the end of the age, not the end of one's life; and the meaning in v. 13 is the same. In every age of the church, true faith is always proved by faithfulness.

Don't Be Ignorant

The emphasis here is on knowing what the Scriptures teach (vv. 14, 23). The "abomination of desolation" refers to the image that the Antichrist ("the Beast" of Rev. 13) will put into the Jewish temple (Dan. 9:27; 2 Thes. 2:3–10) and force the godless world to worship. This may happen in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period and will be a special warning to the Jews in Judea that it is time to get out! This warning has nothing to do with the return of Christ for His church (1 Thes. 4:13–18), for we have no idea when that event will take place. How important it is for us to study and know the prophetic Scriptures so we will not be "in the dark" and led astray (2 Peter 1:12–21). Verses 24–27 describe the end of the Tribulation and the coming of Christ to the earth to defeat His enemies and establish His kingdom (Rev. 19:11–20:5). Once again, the emphasis is on signs; for "the Jews require a sign" (1 Cor. 1:22). See Isa. 13:10 and 34:4, and Joel 2:10, 31, and 3:15. The scattered Jewish nation will be regathered (Deut. 30:3–6; Isa. 43:6) and the nation restored.

Don't Be Careless

The emphasis is on knowing (vv. 28–29) and watching (vv. 33–35, 37). The Parable of the Fig Tree stresses what we know (His coming is near), and the Parable of the Servants stresses what we do not know (when He will come). "Coming events cast their shadows before"; so when we see some of the "tribulation signs" beginning in our day, we know that the time is short (Luke 21:28). But the important thing is not watching the calendar but building our character. We must be alert ("watch") and be found doing His work when He comes. See 1 Thes. 5:1–11.

"This generation" in v. 30 probably refers to the generation of people living when all these things take place. Note how Jesus used the word "generation" in 8:12, 38 and 9:19. In spite of man's wickedness and Satan's anti-Semitic programs, the nation of Israel will not be destroyed.

The chief priests and scribes had already determined to kill Jesus, but they wanted to do it after the Passover. Since Jesus was a popular person, and Jerusalem was filled with excited Jews, it seemed wisest to wait until after the feast; but God had other plans. Judas would make it possible for the leaders to arrest Him during the feast (vv. 10–11; Matt. 26:14–16). The Lamb of God must die on Passover. In this chapter, Mark presents Jesus in four different roles.

Jesus, the Honoured Guest (14:1–11)

This event (Matt. 26:6–13; John 12:2–11) took place before the Triumphal Entry, but Mark placed it here without giving a time reference as John did (John 12:1). We do not know who Simon the leper was. Perhaps he was someone in Bethany whom Jesus had healed of leprosy and whose home was opened to the Master, as was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Mary's act of love was accepted by Jesus, criticized by Judas and the other disciples (John 12:4–6), and reported to the church throughout the world (v. 9). During Passover, the Jews did especially try to help the poor, and Jesus did not oppose this good custom. The ointment cost a year's wages for the average worker, so if it had been sold, the money would have fed a lot of poor people. But Mary wanted to anoint Jesus in preparation for His death and burial, and that was more important than feeding the poor.

Her good work glorified God and was a blessing to the whole world (vv. 6, 9; Matt. 5:14–16). The word "waste" in v.4 is, in the Greek, the same as "perdition" in John 17:12, a verse that refers to Judas. It was Judas who was the "waster," not Mary! He wasted his God-given opportunities and eventually wasted his life, ending it by committing suicide. What a contrast between Mary the worshiper and Judas the traitor!

Jesus, the Gracious Host (14:12–26)

Jesus sent Peter and John (Luke 22:8) to prepare the Upper Room for the last Passover He would celebrate with His disciples. It was unusual for a man to carry a pitcher of water, for this was a task for the women. It is likely that this man, the owner of the house, was one of His disciples. Because He was being watched by His enemies, Jesus had to do things carefully so that others would not be implicated.

Jesus made two startling revelations that evening. First, He revealed that one of the Twelve was a traitor (vv. 17–21). The form of their question indicates that nobody at the table thought himself guilty: "Surely it is not I!" Jesus protected Judas until the very end and gave him every opportunity to repent. We must not think of Judas as a robot, fated to fulfil prophecy (Ps. 41:9; 55:12–14), but as a man who sinned away his opportunities.

The second revelation was that Peter would betray Him. Jesus first revealed this after Judas left the room (John 13:31–38; Luke 22:31–38), and then repeated it when He and the disciples got to the Garden of Gethsemane (vv. 26–31; Matt. 26:30–35). Of course, in his carnal self-confidence, Peter denied that such a thing could happen; but it happened just the same.

At the close of the Passover meal, Jesus took the bread and wine and gave them new meanings as He instituted the Communion (Lord's Supper, Eucharist ["to give thanks"]). We remember people for their lives, but Jesus wants us to remember Him for His death; the spiritual blessings we have as children of God come through His death. The hymn they sang was from Ps. 115–118.

We note Jesus singing a hymn just before being arrested and crucified!

Jesus, the Submissive Son (14:27–42)

When they arrived at Gethsemane (meaning "oil press"), Jesus quoted Zech. 13:7 to warn the disciples not to linger or to follow Him after His arrest. He also gave them a word of encouragement: He would rise from the dead and meet them in Galilee. This was now the fifth mention of His resurrection (8:31; 9:9, 31; 10:34), but the disciples simply did not grasp the message.

The phrases "sore amazed," "very heavy," and "exceedingly sorrowful" reveal the human suffering of our Lord in the Garden (Heb. 5:7–8). He was overwhelmed with anguish as He contemplated taking "the cup": being made sin on the cross and being separated from the Father. The presence and prayers of His friends would have meant so much to Him, but they went to sleep! "The hour had come" (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1), and He was ready to do the Father's will.

Jesus, the Obedient Prisoner (14:43–72)

So ignorant was Judas of the heart of Jesus that he came with a "multitude" of armed Roman soldiers to arrest Him! So hypocritical was Judas that he used kisses, a mark of affection, to betray Jesus. So unprepared spiritually was Peter that he tried to defend Jesus with his sword! Had Peter been awake, he would have heard his Master's prayers and known that He was ready to die. Jesus had a cup in His hand and did the Father's will, for "the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Peter had a sword in his hand and opposed the Father's will, and Jesus had to repair the damage that sword did to Malchus (Luke 22:49–51).

Who was the young man in the Garden? (vv. 51–52) Some think it was John Mark, since it is mentioned only in his Gospel. Was the Upper Room near the home of John Mark, and did Judas and his band go there first? Did Mark hastily wrap a sheet around his body and follow them? We will never know unless the Lord explains it to us in heaven.

Jesus was first led to Annas, father-in-law to Caiaphas, the official high priest (John 18:13–24). Then Jesus was taken to Caiaphas and the Jewish council where people witnessed against Jesus, but their witness did not agree. When Jesus made the messianic claims of v. 62, it was more than the high priest could take; and he declared Him guilty.

Like the other disciples, Peter fled the scene (v. 50); but then he and John disobeyed the Lord's command (v. 27) and began to follow. This led Peter right into the jaws of temptation, and he denied the Lord three times. The Lord's prediction came true (v. 30), but the crowing of the cock brought Peter to repentance (Luke 22:62). If an apostle who lived with Jesus could fall into such sin, how much more do we need to take heed, watch, and pray! John 21:15–19 assures us that Peter was forgiven and restored to apostolic ministry.

Jesus was born To Be King -- KING OF KING'S

Six times in Mark 15, Jesus is called "the King" (vv. 2, 9, 12, 18, 26, 32). The Jewish leaders knew that a religious charge would not make Pilate indict Jesus, so they produced a political charge: Jesus claimed to be a king and was therefore a threat to the peace of the land and the authority of Rome.

The King on Trial (15:1–15)

Early in the morning, the Sanhedrin met a second time and pronounced Jesus guilty of blasphemy and therefore worthy of death (Lev. 24:16). But only Rome could put a criminal to death, so the council needed the cooperation of the governor, Pontius Pilate. The chief priests repeatedly accused Jesus before Pilate, but Jesus was silent. It was Pilate, not Jesus, who was on trial! See Isa. 53:7 and 1 Peter 2:13–25.

As the defender of the rights of the people, Pilate should have examined the facts and made a decision based on truth. But he was more interested in peace than truth, so he offered the crowd an attractive compromise: Jesus or Barabbas? By rights, Barabbas should have been slain because he was a convicted murderer (Num. 35:16–21). If Pilate thought the crowd would choose Jesus, he was certainly ignorant of the human heart!

The King Mocked (15:16–20)

Jesus had told His disciples that the Gentiles would mock Him (10:34), and His words came true. If a prisoner were treated that way today, what would the official consequences be? Roman soldiers could not help but be entertained by the thought of a Jewish king! Once again, prophecy was fulfilled (Isa. 50:6; 52:14; 53:5; Ps. 69:7).

The King Crucified (15:21–41)

Jesus started out for Golgotha carrying His own cross (John 19:17), but along the way, the Roman soldiers took it from Him and drafted Simon to carry it. The word "compel" in v. 21 means "to impress into public service," and the soldiers had the legal right to do this (Matt. 5:41). When Mark wrote his Gospel, his readers would know Simon as "the father of Alexander and Rufus" (v. 21), well-known men in the church (Rom. 16:13). Simon's humiliating experience led to his own conversion and that of his family. He came to Jerusalem for Passover and met the Lamb of God!

The narcotic drink that was provided would have deadened the pain, but Jesus refused it. He bore to the fullest the sufferings for our sins. Also, He had promised His disciples that He would not drink the fruit of the vine until He feasted with them in the kingdom (Matt. 26:29).

They crucified Jesus about 9 o'clock in the morning (v. 25) along with two thieves (Isa.

53:12; Luke 22:37). When the soldiers cast lots for His garments, they unknowingly fulfilled Ps. 22:18. When man was doing his worst, God was still in control and accomplishing His purposes. You would think that the people would have been hushed and reverent at a place like Calvary, but they were not; the mockery continued. "Save yourself!" has always been the world's cry, but "Give yourself!" is the Lord's command to us (John 12:23–28). Jesus was reviled by the passers-by (v. 29), the leaders (vv. 31–32), the thieves (v. 32), and the soldiers (Luke 23:36–37). One of the thieves did trust Christ, however, and entered into His kingdom (Luke 23:39–43).

Mark records the miracles of the darkness (v. 33) and the rent veil (v. 38). The darkness reminds us of God's judgment on Egypt (Ex. 10:22ff), and the rent veil announces that the way into God's presence has been opened by the death of Christ (Heb. 10:1–25). Jesus was not murdered; He voluntarily gave up His spirit (John 10:11, 15). His cry (v. 34) echoes Ps. 22:1; in fact, Ps. 22:1–21 is a prophetic picture of our Lord's death on the cross. Jesus was forsaken of the Father that we might never be forsaken.

The King Buried (15:42–47)

Faithful women were the last to be found at the cross and the first to be found at the tomb (16:1ff). Our Lord's mother was at the cross until John took her away (John 19:25–27). But it was Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (John 19:38–42) that God had prepared to protect the body of Jesus and bury it (Isa. 53:9; Matt. 27:57). Nicodemus had come to Jesus by night (John 3), but now he stepped out into the light and took his stand for Christ. Had these two brave men not buried the body of Jesus, it might have been disposed of in some humiliating manner. It is important to the legitimacy of the Gospel message that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ be authenticated as historic facts (1 Cor. 15:1–4).

An Unexpected Miracle (16:1–8)

The women came to give Jesus' body proper preparation for permanent burial, and while we admire their devotion, we wonder why they forgot His many resurrection promises. Now that the Sabbath was ended, the shops were open, and they could purchase the large amount of spices needed. Their biggest problem was getting into the tomb, for a large stone blocked the entrance. What they found in the garden was entirely unexpected: the stone rolled back, the body gone, and a messenger waiting to give them the good news of His resurrection!

It was not enough to be spectators; they had to become ambassadors and carry the word to others. "Come and see! Go and tell!" is the resurrection responsibility (Matt. 28:6–7). Note that the angel had a special word of encouragement for Peter and a word of direction for all the disciples (v. 7). Like the women, the men had forgotten His promises and instructions (14:28). Were the women emotionally fit to carry such a message? They trembled, were amazed and afraid, and fled from the place! Matthew tells us their hearts

were filled with "fear and great joy" (Matt. 28:8) because the news was just too good to be true! They did tell the disciples, who doubted what they heard, but Peter and John investigated the open tomb (John 20:1–10; Luke 24:12).

An Unbelievable Message (16:9–14)

The emphasis in this section is on the unbelief of Christ's own disciples when confronted with the fact of His resurrection. The disciples "mourned and wept" when they should have been rejoicing and praising God. The appearance to the two men on the Emmaus road is given in detail by Luke (Luke 24:13–32), and His appearance in the Upper Room in John 20:19–25. It was a weeping church instead of a witnessing church because they did not really believe that their Master was alive. The miracle of His bodily resurrection is important to the message of the Gospel and the motivation of God's people for witness and service (Acts 1:21–22; 2:32; 4:10, 33).

An Unlimited Mandate (16:15–18)

Each of the four Gospels ends with a commission from Christ to His church to carry the Gospel message to the ends of the earth (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:46–49; John 20:21–23; and see Acts 1:8). The emphasis in v. 16 is not on baptism but on believing. In the early church, believing on Jesus Christ led to a public declaration of faith in the ordinance of water baptism (Acts 8:36–38; 10:47–48), and being baptized sometimes cost people their family, friends, and job. If water baptism is essential to salvation, then nobody in the OT was saved; Heb. 11 tells us that OT saints were saved by faith.

The special signs described in vv. 17–18 applied primarily to the apostolic age (Heb. 2:3–4; 2 Cor. 12:12) and are recorded in the Book of Acts: speaking in tongues (Acts 2:1–4; 10:44–46), casting out demons (Acts 8:5–7; 19:12), taking up serpents (Acts 28:3–6), and healing the sick (Acts 3:1–10; 5:15–16). There are no references to people surviving after drinking poison, but not every miracle is mentioned in Acts. These "sign" miracles are given to encourage us to trust God and not to tempt Him with foolish experiments. These signs were the credentials of the apostles (v. 20), but it is not necessary to perform miracles in order to serve the Lord (John 10:39–42).

The church's mandate is still to take the Gospel to the whole world, and we have a long way to go!

An Unchanging Ministry (16:19–20)

Having completed His work on earth, Jesus returned to the Father in Heaven; and there He represents us as our High Priest (Heb. 4:14–16) and Advocate (1 John 2:1–2). But He does more than represent us; He also works in us and through us to accomplish the mandate He left with His church. Since the Gospel of Mark emphasizes Christ the Servant, it is only right that the book close with this reminder that God's Servant is still at work! He works in us (Heb. 13:20–21; Phil. 2:12–13), with us (v. 20), and for us (Rom. 8:28) if we will allow Him to work through us by the power of His Holy Spirit.

Jerusalem - THE CENTRAL CITY OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

Topography: Jerusalem does not derive its importance from natural endowments except for a perennial spring. Situated at the edge of the Judean desert, it has an arid climate. Its land is agriculturally poor and its limestone base has no minerals of value. Strabo, a Greek geographer of the first century A.D., described it as a place that would not be envied, one for which no one would fight.

The area over which the city has spread lies between the divided watershed of the highlands, the ridge road, and the Mount of Olives. The Kidron Valley separates it from the Mount of Olives on the east and the north, and the Hinnom Valley from the ridge on the west and south. Its terrain is rugged. Running through the middle of the area is a north-south valley called the Tyropoeon (Heb., 'cheese makers'). Between the Tyropoeon and the Kidron the short Beth-zatha Valley further divides this section. The resulting hill between the Tyropoeon and Kidron valleys is squeezed to a narrow land bridge at its centre. The steeply sloping area south of this was called originally Mount Zion or the Ophel hill; the flatter area to its north, where the Dome of the Rock is now located, Mount Moriah or the Temple Mount. 'Zion' eventually was used to refer to both areas as well as the city as a whole. A still higher section lies north of the Temple Mount, known as Beth-zatha in the first century and now as the Moslem Quarter. The hill formed between the Hinnom and Tyropoeon valleys is divided by two east-west depressions. The southern one runs along the line of the present Old City wall forming an area to its south now wrongly called Mount Zion. The one to the north borders the present David Street. The Jewish and Armenian quarters now cover the area between the depressions. The entire area south of this depression is also called the western hill. The area to the north of it is the present Christian Quarter. The entire western section slopes downward from west to east. The location of Jerusalem was not suited for a well laid-out city plan.

Nor was Jerusalem blessed with an abundant water supply. Only one spring was located in the area, the Gihon. Being on the level of the Kidron Valley it was not naturally a protected site. A second spring, En-rogel, located in the middle of the Kidron but south of the city was even more exposed.

In later tradition Jerusalem's poor setting would be understood as the result of the loss of paradise, which was thought to have been located here. The Gihon spring was described as the remnant of one of the rivers of Eden (Gen. 2:13). Mount Moriah, the Temple Mount, was seen as the foundation or navel of the earth.

Jerusalem was not an important natural commercial centre. It did not straddle a major trade crossroad as did Shechem or Bethel. The natural east-west axis of trade was eight miles north of this area on the Beth-horon Road and the Way of Bethel-Ai.

Jerusalem was initially important for its control of traffic along the north-south ridge road as it enters a broad, comparatively level section of the highlands to its north. This area was the territory of the tribe of Benjamin to which Jerusalem belonged. It also served to

protect against any aggression from the west through the Sorek-Rephaim valley system and to prevent surprise attack from the Judean desert.

Early History: In the Paleolithic period (prior to ca. 25,000 B.C.) the broad area where the Rephaim Valley meets the north-south ridge, not the rugged terrain east of the ridge, was the location of the first known settlement in the Excavations on Ophel hill confirm that during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 B.C.) there was a walled city. The wall followed the edge of the hill on the west side but enclosed most of the slope on the east. A tower of the eastern gate was uncovered near the Gihon spring. The entrance to the spring, which remained outside the city walls on the valley floor, was covered and shafts were dug to it from just inside the city walls. In order to make use of the slope above the city walls, terraces were built called *millu* (Heb., ‘filling’), which were often in need of repair (2 Sam. 5:9). By the Late Bronze Age (1500-1200 B.C.) the Jebusites occupied this excellent stronghold, which they boasted the lame and blind could defend (2 Sam. 5:6). The 11-acre city with a crowded population of no more than 1000 was called Jebus during this period. Jebus’s strength is indicated by its being the last major city on the ridge to resist settlement by the people under Joshua. Although located within Benjaminite borders, it was never occupied by this tribe for any significant period (Josh. 18:16; Judges. 1:21). Its king, Adonizedek, led the Amorite kings of the south against Joshua (Josh. 10:1).

Under David and Solomon: Jerusalem was elevated to its place of central importance by David ca. 1000 B.C. He turned Jerusalem into a religious and political symbol of the unity of the people of God. David needed a neutral place, located at the boundary between the northern and southern groups of the Israelites, to establish his monarchy. He took the city by utilizing the steep shaft of the Gihon spring, through which his commander, Joab, entered the city. Joab then opened the gates to David’s forces (2 Sam. 5:8). The city was now also called the City of David. Judah occupied it (Josh. 15:63). There was no need to alter the size or defences of the city. David’s palace was built on the north end of the city.

Mount Moriah, or the Temple Mount, is 130 feet above the City of David and provides for a central holy place. This was the ‘threshing floor of Arauna’ (2 Sam. 24) and probably had been a Jebusite holy area as well. The tabernacle was set here and the Ark brought to rest in its Holy of Holies. Given its dual function as administrative centre and holy place for the entire nation, Jerusalem prospered. The resulting symbol of unity was paradoxical. A poorly endowed village had become a crucial religious and political centre. Its central holy place was even lower than the hills about it. God’s exaltation of this common place became an important motif in Israelite theology (Ps. 68:15-16; Ezek. 16:1-10).

Although forbidden by the Torah to bury in a city, David may have followed foreign custom by having a tomb prepared in the middle of the city (1 Kings 2:10). The kings of Judah continued to follow this custom. A series of horizontal shaft tombs have been uncovered in the centre of Ophel. It is not certain that these belong to the kings of Judah. Some claim that ‘in’ Jerusalem refers to the area around the city and doubt that David’s tomb was within its walls. In the first century, however, David’s tomb was thought to be

in this part of the city. area. This site overlooked the Rephaim Valley to the west and the Hinnom to the east as it rested on the ridge. It flourished ca. 120,000 B.C. In historic times this area was too vulnerable and lacked a sufficient water supply for any substantial settlement. People migrated to the Gihon spring area.

Mount Zion (Heb., 'dry place') above the spring is well protected by the Kidron and the Tyropoeon valleys. The western hill is sufficiently distant and steeply sloped to keep archers at a safe range, although it blocks the view of the ridge road. The north side, in all times the most exposed part of the city, was defended by a high 'bulge,' Ophel, and the easily protected land bridge to the Temple Mount.

The earliest indication of settlement so far discovered on the Ophel hill was in the Early Bronze Age (3000-2000 B.C.). No walls or buildings have been found. Ophel hill may simply have supported an encampment around the Gihon spring.

The early records of Jerusalem's name, which appears only in lists, underscore its unexceptional nature. Its earliest appearance, called 'Salim,' may be in commercial documents from Ebla in Syria ca. 2400 B.C. Egyptian execration texts from the nineteenth century B.C. call the city 'Rushalimum,' and those from el-Amarna in Syria in the fourteenth century 'Urusalim.' The name probably meant 'the foundation of the god, Salem.' 'Salem' became its shortened form (Ps. 76:2; and Gen. 14:18, if this originally referred to Jerusalem, not Salem in Samaria). Jerusalem was understood in rabbinic and Christian writings to mean 'Seeing of Peace.' The interpretation 'City of Peace' became popular after the biblical period. Excavations on Ophel hill confirm that during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 B.C.) there was a walled city. The wall followed the edge of the hill on the west side but enclosed most of the slope on the east. A tower of the eastern gate was uncovered near the Gihon spring. The entrance to the spring, which remained outside the city walls on the valley floor, was covered and shafts were dug to it from just inside the city walls. In order to make use of the slope above the city walls, terraces were built called *millu* (Heb., 'filling'), which were often in need of repair (2 Sam. 5:9). By the Late Bronze Age (1500-1200 B.C.) the Jebusites occupied this excellent stronghold, which they boasted the lame and blind could defend (2 Sam. 5:6). The 11-acre city with a crowded population of no more than 1000 was called Jebus during this period. Jebus's strength is indicated by its being the last major city on the ridge to resist settlement by the people under Joshua. Although located within Benjaminite borders, it was never occupied by this tribe for any significant period (Josh. 18:16; Judges. 1:21). Its king, Adonizedek, led the Amorite kings of the south against Joshua (Josh. 10:1).

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The Divided Monarchy to the Fall of Judah (587 B.C.): The additional walled space did not provide for normal housing growth. The population spread to the western hill, which was heavily populated by the eighth century. Tombs from the ninth century found in the Tyropoeon Valley side of the Temple Mount may indicate sparse settlement in the area prior to the eighth century. The western hill was known as Mishneh, 'second.' A wall was built to enclose the Mishneh in the eighth century. A 128-foot section of this wall has been found in the middle of the Jewish Quarter. It is 22.5 feet thick and is preserved in places to a height of 10 feet. The extent of the walled area is not clear. Some would limit the walled area to three-quarters of the present Jewish Quarter with the southern limit being the Old City walls. Others would extend it farther south.

The need for strengthening Jerusalem's defence system became acute when Assyria threatened Judah after taking the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. Hezekiah strengthened the city walls. A tower and gate were built just north of the wall segment at the edge of the northern east-west depression, evidently to provide a double entrance at the

vulnerable north side of the city. The tower still stands to a height of 25.5 feet. Some claim the wall was then extended to the top of the western hill, passing through the present citadel area and along the line of the Old City wall, then continuing around the western hill until it reached the City of David. No remains have been found.

Hezekiah sealed the Gihon spring and cut a 1,750-foot tunnel beneath the City of David to bring the water into the Tyropoeon Valley on the west side of Ophel, where it could be better protected (2 Chronicles. 32:2-4). The Pool of Siloam was constructed to collect the water (John 8:7). This was eventually divided into upper and lower basins. One of the earliest inscriptions found in Jerusalem is the 'Siloam Inscription,' which was chiselled near the tunnel's mouth. It describes the meeting of the workers who dug from both ends of the tunnel. The pool was either protected by the newly constructed city wall or enclosed in a cistern.

Some of the stone for Hezekiah's building projects was probably taken from a quarry located north of the Temple Mount near the present-day Damascus Gate, now called Solomon's Quarry or Zedekiah's Cave. This quarry was used through the Roman period (63 B.C.-A.D. 324).

When the messengers of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, approached the secured city, their offers for peaceful submission were rebuffed. Soon after, Assyria was forced to depart the land, never testing the defence preparations (2 Kings 18-19). Sennacherib's view of the city is reflected in his description of Hezekiah as a prisoner in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage.

Jerusalem under the succeeding kings of Judah did not continue its trust in God as it had under Hezekiah. The image of the prostitute and widow became prophetic ways of describing the city as more pagan practices entered its life (Isaiah. 1:21; Lam. 1; Ezek. 16). Jesus would continue to use this female imagery when addressing the city (Luke 23:28). Evidence of the decadence of the city is seen in the number of fertility goddesses found in excavations. The city was warned that it would be returned to its lowly origin if it did not reform. Zion would be plowed as a field (Micah. 3:12).

A century later this prophecy was fulfilled. Excavations on the Ophel and Mishneh indicate how devastating was Babylon's plundering of the city in 598 B.C. and its levelling of it in 587 B.C. (2 Kings 25:10). Spearheads still litter the Mishneh wall area. Building walls are charred and their basements filled with ash and rubble. The supports of the millo were removed and the terraces left to erode. So complete was the destruction on the eastern slopes of the Ophel that that area would never be part of the city again. Jerusalem's population was taken into exile.

The Restoration to the Hasmoneans: In 538 B.C. Cyrus of Persia gave permission for a group of exiles to return and rebuild the city (Ezra 1). Only a fraction of the former population returned and the city was confined to Ophel. during this period has been found on the western hills. The No evidence of occupation lack of artefacts or pottery from this period outside of Ophel further indicates how small the population was. The city walls built by Nehemiah (mid-sixth century B.C.) only circled the crest of the Ophel, the slopes

above Gihon spring being left outside of the city. Zerubbabel rebuilt the Temple. The city no longer was a symbol of the unity of the north and south but was reduced to a centre for preserving Judean purity (Neh. 13:28-30). Jerusalem would retain this understanding of its role into the Roman period (John 4:20-22).

During the Persian period (538-333 B.C.) a different picture of Jerusalem was developed by those opposed to the city's becoming so exclusive in its political and religious life. They lost hope in the establishment of the symbol of unity of a united Israel by political means, and in apocalyptic visions they dreamed of a transformed city established by God at the end of time. This Jerusalem no longer is located in a poor setting. Its geography is totally altered to exalt the city. The surrounding hills are levelled and the city is raised to the highest of mountains (Zech. 14:16-19; Isaiah. 40:4). It returns to its state before the loss of paradise (Ezek47). From this centre of the world God rules as a victorious king. The nations come as pilgrims to central Jerusalem to worship (Isaiah. 56:1-8; Zech. 14:16-19). This apocalyptic vision of Jerusalem continues into NT times (Rev. 21-22). In the Hellenistic period (333-63 B.C.) the attempt to establish a religiously pure Jerusalem resulted in conflict among Judeans themselves. Part of the inhabitants wanted to follow the Hellenistic culture brought to the east by Alexander the Great. A stadium and gymnasium were built in the city (1 Macc. 1:14). Some of its inhabitants were granted Antiochean (Greek) citizenship (2 Macc. 4:9). This has been understood by some to mean that the name of the city was changed to Antioch, an opinion that is now generally doubted. In order for their party to control the city, the Hellenists built a fortress by the Temple Mount called the Akra. No traces of this building have been found. It is possible it was located north of the Temple Mount in the area of the present Via Dolorosa.

As Jerusalem again gained in importance as a religious and political centre, the western hill again was used by the growing population. The city wall of the Mishneh was rebuilt after the anti-Hellenistic Hasmoneans finally took control of the city in the second century B.C. This was probably part of the building program completed by the Hasmonean (Maccabean) Simon in 140 B.C. (1 Macc. 14:37). The city wall definitely encircled the entire western hill. Portions of the wall have been found on all sides of this area. A defence tower was built in the centre of the northern part of the wall beside that of Hezekiah's day.

Under Rome: After the Romans conquered the city in 63 B.C. under Pompey, Jerusalem reached its pinnacle of grandeur and strength as a result of the building program of Herod the Great, whom Rome appointed king of Judea in 40 B.C. He strengthened the Hasmonean walls. At the top of the western hill he built a huge palace complex for himself. Its two sections were named after his Roman benefactors, Caesar and Agrippa: the Caesarium and Agrippium. This later became the praetorium (quarters) for the prefect or procurator of Judea. Three monumental towers built into the Hasmonean wall as it curved to the south protected the palace from attacks from the north at this vulnerable corner of the city. The towers were named Mariamne (after Herod's wife), Phaesalis (after his brother), and Hippicus (after his friend). The base of Phaesalis tower, now called 'The Tower of David,' is still standing in the citadel area of the Old City.

The northern section of the Hasmonean wall was also vulnerable where the ridge created by the northern east-west depression disappears along its eastern half. To strengthen this and include more of the western area in the city, Herod built a second wall that circled from the middle of the first, or Hasmonean wall, to a fortress north of the Temple Mount called the Antonia. Some trace this wall as far north as the present-day Damascus Gate, where it is claimed part of the wall has been found. Others describe the wall as turning to the Antonia just east of the Church of the Resurrection. To further strengthen this second wall, which was open to attack from the west, a quarry was opened in front of it that served as a defence moat. Excavations in the area of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer have uncovered parts of this quarry. The entrance to the quarry cut into the sloping western hill. A section of this was not worth quarrying and it was left standing as a mound of limestone. It was called Golgotha, Aramaic and Heb., 'skull' (John 19:17). This part of the quarry belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, who cut his family tomb into the exposed hill of the quarry adjacent to Golgotha (John 19:41). This is now part of the Church of the Resurrection and probably was the burial place of Jesus. Herod's most spectacular building project in the city was on the Temple Mount. He extended the level top of the Temple Mount to the south by a huge platform at places reaching a height of 180 feet. Access to the Temple Mount from the western hill was by bridge over the Tyropoeon Valley in the area of the present Wailing Wall and by a magnificent staircase from the market that was southwest of the Temple Mount. Access from the Ophel was by two subterranean passages.

North of the Temple Mount a huge fortress, called the Antonia after Herod's first Roman patron, controlled activity on the Temple Mount as well as provided further protection from the district of Beth-zatha, which sloped to the Temple Mount from the north. This was also called 'the Barracks' (Acts 21:37). As with the second wall built by Herod, this defence was strengthened by a moat called the Struthion Pool. The political administrative centres of the Antonia, Caesarium, and Agrippium dominated the Temple, visually reminding the city of the strength of its occupiers. The Pool of Siloam, En-rogel, the Struthion Pool, and cisterns in homes were not enough to meet the demands for water in this administrative and pilgrim centre whose population had grown to about twenty-five thousand and may have supported an additional seventy-five thousand during major festivals. The Hinnom Valley was dammed on the west side of the city to provide reservoirs. This had already been done to the Beth-zatha Valley at the northeast corner of the Temple Mount before Herod. This double reservoir was called the Sheep Pool (John 5:2). The reservoirs have been excavated near St. Anne's Church. When these did not suffice, Herod built aqueducts from a spring area south of Bethlehem, now called the Pools of Solomon, to Jerusalem. By the first third of the first century A.D. this also had to be expanded by building an aqueduct from springs even further south in the Valley of Baraka. This was a project of Pontius Pilate.

The discovery of a shrine to the god of healing, Aesculapius or Serapis, by Beth-zatha's Sheep Pool, evidences the continuing Hellenistic influence in Tension between Jerusalem and Rome reached its climax during the rebellion begun in A.D. 66. In A.D. 70 three legions were sent to bring the city again under Roman control. The line of blocks found

north of the city may be evidence of their siege wall. Jerusalem was captured and destroyed in August of A.D. 70 on the same day, according to tradition, that it had fallen to the Babylonians. Excavations show that the destruction was equally devastating. Only the Temple platform and Phasael's Tower were left standing. The city's walls were torn down and the buildings fired. Citizens were slaughtered in their homes. As the OT prophets had warned of the destruction of Jerusalem because of the derogation of its symbol of political and religious unity under God's law, so Jesus had warned of the city's destruction during his ministry (Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24).

Through the last third of the first century most of the city remained in ruins. Jamnia (Yavneh) on the coastal plain became the religious centre of the country as the Pharisaic party was appointed by Rome to represent the Judeans. There is little evidence that the Temple's altar was restored for worship. None of the fine homes or administrative centres were rebuilt. Tensions with Jerusalem's occupying power were not reduced, however. This resulted in a second revolt against Rome in A.D. 130 led by Bar-Kochba. The immediate cause of the war was Rome's decision to build a temple to Jupiter on the Temple Mount. It is not clear whether this was completed before or after the revolt. After the revolt was crushed all Judeans were banned from the city. The temple to Jupiter on the Temple Mount was completed. Jesus had predicted that such a pagan centre would be set up in the Temple area (Mark 13:14).

The city was rebuilt as a Roman military camp called Aelia Capitolina. Aelia was the family name of Hadrian, the emperor who crushed the revolt, and Capitolina referred to Jupiter. This small city was concentrated on the western hill in the area of the present Jewish Quarter. The area just north of the city became its forum. Remains of the second wall were levelled and the quarry in the area was filled when the forum was laid out. Golgotha on the north edge of the forum was rejoined by fill to the western slope and served as the acropolis for the forum. A temple to Aphrodite was constructed here. A fine monumental arch was built at the site of the present Damascus Gate and in the area where the Struthion Pool had been located. This was the extent of the city until the rise of Constantine (early fourth century A.D.), who made Jerusalem a Christian centre. Golgotha and the tomb of Jesus now became part of a church that was the centre of a Jerusalem whose walls extended around the western hill, the City of David, the Temple Mount and the suburbs north of the city as far as the present city walls. Byzantine Jerusalem reached its greatest size as a walled city. Jerusalem. Shallow pools and votives from this healing centre have been found. Jesus demonstrated God's superiority to pagan gods by healing a person here (John 5:2-9).

Roman cultural influence is reflected in the homes of the wealthy on the western hill, now called the Upper City. In its mansions one found fine imported pottery, frescoes made according to the most advanced techniques, and fine glassware. As did other cities of the Roman Empire, Jerusalem had places of entertainment such as a stadium to the north of the city and a theatre, probably located in the Kidron Valley.

Tension under Roman domination grew as did appreciation of that culture. The attempt by Herod Agrippa in A.D. 42 to bring the northern suburbs of the city within a third wall

was halted before completion of the wall so that the city would not become even more difficult for Rome to control in the event of a rebellion. Some claim that the line of this third wall follows that of the present-day northern Old City wall. Wall fragments from this period have been found in the Damascus Gate area of the present Old City. Others place the wall 400 yards north of Damascus Gate, where sections of wall or monumental building stones have been found. If this was the third wall, it had no foundation.

Tension between Jerusalem and Rome reached its climax during the rebellion begun in A.D. 66. In A.D. 70 three legions were sent to bring the city again under Roman control. The line of blocks found north of the city may be evidence of their siege wall. Jerusalem was captured and destroyed in August of A.D. 70 on the same day, according to tradition, that it had fallen to the Babylonians. Excavations show that the destruction was equally devastating. Only the Temple platform and Phaesalis Tower were left standing. The city's walls were torn down and the buildings fired. Citizens were slaughtered in their homes. As the OT prophets had warned of the destruction of Jerusalem because of the derogation of its symbol of political and religious unity under God's law, so Jesus had warned of the city's destruction during his ministry (Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24).

Through the last third of the first century most of the city remained in ruins. Jamnia (Yavneh) on the coastal plain became the religious centre of the country as the Pharisaic party was appointed by Rome to represent the Judeans. There is little evidence that the Temple's altar was restored for worship. None of the fine homes or administrative centres were rebuilt. Tensions with Jerusalem's occupying power were not reduced, however. This resulted in a second revolt against Rome in A.D. 130 led by Bar-Kochba. The immediate cause of the war was Rome's decision to build a temple to Jupiter on the Temple Mount. It is not clear whether this was completed before or after the revolt. After the revolt was crushed all Judeans were banned from the city. The temple to Jupiter on the Temple Mount was completed. Jesus had predicted that such a pagan centre would be set up in the Temple area (Mark 13:14).

The city was rebuilt as a Roman military camp called Aelia Capitolina. Aelia was the family name of Hadrian, the emperor who crushed the revolt, and Capitolina referred to Jupiter. This small city was concentrated on the western hill in the area of the present Jewish Quarter. The area just north of the city became its forum. Remains of the second wall were levelled and the quarry in the area was filled when the forum was laid out. Golgotha on the north edge of the forum was rejoined by fill to the western slope and served as the acropolis for the forum. A temple to Aphrodite was constructed here. A fine monumental arch was built at the site of the present Damascus Gate and in the area where the Struthion Pool had been located. This was the extent of the city until the rise of Constantine (early fourth century A.D.), who made Jerusalem a Christian centre. Golgotha and the tomb of Jesus now became part of a church that was the centre of a Jerusalem whose walls extended around the western hill, the City of David, the Temple Mount and the suburbs north of the city as far as the present city walls. Byzantine Jerusalem reached its greatest size as a walled city.

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In preparing this piece of work I am indebted to reference works of great and godly Christian writers including:

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